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Camp Fire Girls**



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# In Camp With the Muskoday Camp Fire Girls

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By  
AMY E. BLANCHARD

ILLUSTRATED BY  
FRANK T. MERRILL

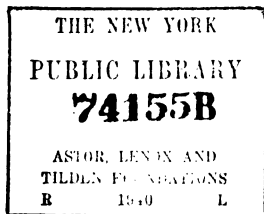


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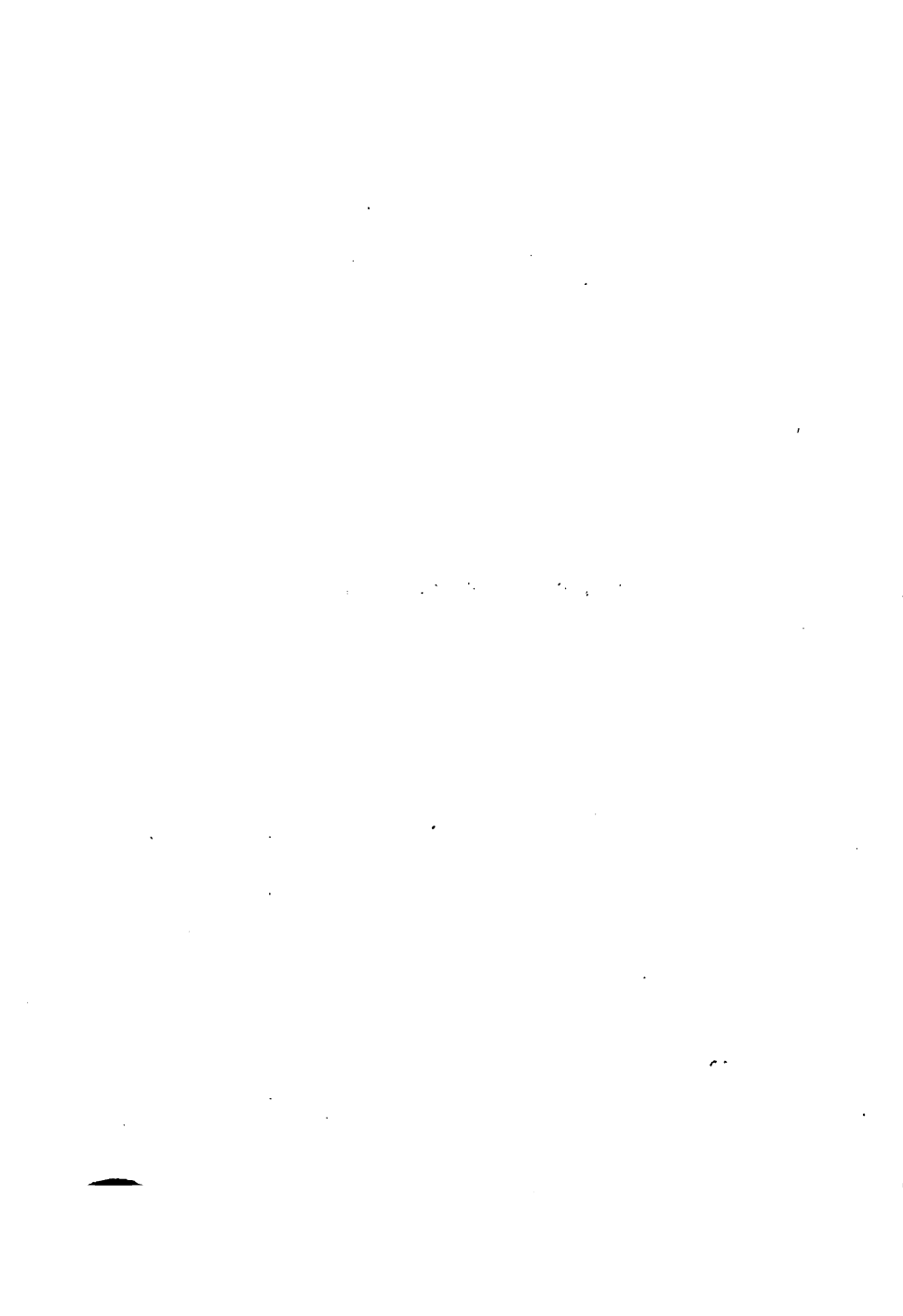
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**IN CAMP WITH THE MUSKODAY CAMP FIRE GIRLS**

JF

To  
*The Girls of Camp Ohuivo*

Gift Mrs. L. Murray Carter



## FOREWORD

**T**O those girls who know nothing about the joys of camp life such experiences as those of the Muskoday Camp Fire Girls must come as a revelation. The memory of my own pleasure in the camp by the lake is heightened as I hand on this account, and while one must embroider facts in order to make a good story, the facts are there as a fabric to give body to the ornamentation. The doings of the Muskoday Camp Fire Girls I hope may inspire others to deeds of as fair accomplishment, and in all States, in all lands—may they as conscientiously “follow the Law of the Fire.”

A. E. B.



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# In Camp With the Muskoday Camp Fire Girls

## CHAPTER I

### CAMP KUEQUENÁKU

“**W**OHELO, wohelo, Kuequenáku!” came the cry across the lake as a motor boat drew nearer and nearer the shore.

“There they are!” exclaimed Judy Falkner.

Her friend, Kathleen Gilman, sitting near her, gripped her arm. “O Judy, it seems almost too good to be true,” she whispered excitedly as her eyes took in the fringe of white birches reflected greenly in the clear water along the shores, and further away the rustic shelters under the trees.

At the little landing groups of girls stood waiting; most of them were in bloomers and jumpers but some wore bathing suits. Presently there was a wild dash overboard from the spring-board, then another and another. Kathleen caught her breath at each swift plunge but laughed with the rest when a bevy of girls surrounded the boat, now slowing up, and clung with wet hands to the sides. “O you ducks!” cried Kath-

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leen as she recognized Kitty Acker and Molly Ludlow. "What a watery welcome! I feel so very dry when I look at you!"

"We'll give you a glass of lemonade, dear," said Kitty.

"I may have said duck when I meant goose," retorted Kathleen. "It was an external dryness to which I alluded."

"Step out, step out," urged Judy as the boat was made fast. "You're no water witch, we'll admit, but you need not be so extremely cautious about getting out of a motor boat."

"I confess to being a regular landlubber," returned Kathleen. "Our mountainsides aren't very encouraging to water sports, but I am determined to become a true water baby before I leave here."

"Wait till you have to handle a canoe," returned Molly; "that's the kind of thing that gets you going," she went on as she climbed up on the wharf and stood drippingly by while the new arrivals left the boat.

"Which is our lodge, or do we have a tent?" asked Judy mounting the path which wound between slim birches and odorous pines.

"Minnewawa is to be yours," Miss Keene told her. "You will share it with Kathleen and Miss Wade at present. Later on we shall put some others in there. You know there are three rooms."



"It's the new lodge, isn't it? How lovely of you to give it to us! I am wild to see it. Down this little path? Past the Worship Grove? What a heavenly place! I just love it, don't you, Kathleen?"

"It is perfectly fascinating," she answered as they paused in the grassy path to take a full view. The building was almost entirely surrounded by white pines, though the small grassy level just in front was overhung by trees of various kinds which stood upon the higher ground. The shack was built of broad slabs, with wide, projecting eaves. Half-way up it was open to the air but the protection afforded by the eaves prevented any except violent rain from coming in. The rooms were separated by board partitions running up six or seven feet. Two of the rooms were furnished with two cots, a primitive wash-stand, a couple of chairs and a set of shelves. All was as simple as possible.

"We haven't put on any finishing touches," Miss Keene told them, "for we knew that you would want to do that yourselves."

"Indeed we shall want to," returned Judy. "I am counting on Kathleen's decorative genius to win us all the honors going."

Miss Keene left them and Judy lost no time in divesting herself of her travelling clothes. "Good-bye hat," she said; "no more of you this summer."

"Where shall you keep it?" asked Kathleen taking off her own head-gear with more care.

"Put it in a paper bag, mark it with my name and hang it up in the attic of the Wigwam."

"And where is that?"

"Don't you know? That is the name of the big bungalow where we take our meals and have most of our doings of an indoor kind. There is a large attic over the living-room where we stow away all sorts of things; materials of different kinds for basketry and bead work, properties for any sort of little play we may get up on the spur of the moment, and such things of our own as may not be in constant use and which we should not have room for in our shacks. Our little steamer trunks will be all that we shall keep down here. They will hold our every-day things, and there you are!"

Kathleen gave a sigh of relief upon hearing this explanation, for she was beginning to wonder how such a very simple sort of equipment was going to serve for any kind of comfort. "It's great not to be bothered with superfluties, isn't it?" she said. "What are you doing, Judy?"

"Looking to see if our water buckets are filled. We don't have pitchers, just these unbreakable basins, water buckets and dippers. I mean to go down to the lake for a dip so as to get rid of some of this dust of

travel, but perhaps you'd rather freshen yourself up in here. I'll run down to the spring and get you some water."

"You will go down and get me some water?"

Judy paused in the doorway, bucket in hand. "Yes, why not? Do you think me incapable of carrying a bucket of water? I assure you I have done it times without number."

"It doesn't seem possible," declared Kathleen, "that you should be ready to do such things. What would your mother say?"

Judy laughed. "I suppose she would be properly shocked, poor mother, but that is because she hasn't the proper idea of values. She admits that I come home quite made over after a summer up here, but you could never make her believe that it is on account of anything but the climate."

"Oh, do see that gray squirrel," exclaimed Kathleen. "He is scolding at us like mad. Evidently he objects to our intrusion upon his woods. Bunny, dear, of course we know that you have a preempted right to this property, and that the idea of chattering humans taking possession is too much for your equilibrium, but I am afraid you will have to stand us till fall comes. Where is the spring, Judy? I want to go, too. You can take one bucket and I'll take the other."

"The spring is further down the hill. There is a

hydraulic ram that sends the water up to the Wigwam, but it doesn't supply all the lodges."

They found the spring gushing forth from a rocky basin and sending a babbling little rill down the hill to the lake. Ferns and wild flowers bordered the tiny stream and formed a fringe round the spring itself.

"Such a lovely spot!" commented Kathleen looking around while Judy, kneeling on a flat stone by the spring, dipped up the water to fill her bucket. Then she stood up to take a long draught. "My, how good it is," she said, "so cold and clear and sparkling. Miss Keene is very particular about having the spring kept clean and you need have no scruples in drinking from it." She held out a dipperful of water to Kathleen who satisfied her thirst before she filled the bucket she had brought. Then the two toiled back to the shack.

"This is called Worship Grove," Judy announced stopping to rest her bucket on a log at the side of the path. "We thought of calling it Manitou, but the other name seemed better. We have prayers here every morning, and some of our ceremonials, though generally we build our Council fires further off."

"It is all perfectly fascinating," replied Kathleen. "After all, Judy, I believe I will go down and see you take your dip. I can paddle round, at least, even if I do no more."

Judy was no time in getting into her bathing suit, but Kathleen was slow in donning the unaccustomed garments, so Judy declared she would not wait and that Kathleen could follow when she chose. Kathleen watched her running agilely down the path to the lake and presently pursued her winding way down the hill. She arrived just in time to see Judy plunge from the wharf into the water and swim out dexterously. Kathleen, who had not yet arrived at any such skill, was content with much less. She stood for one moment outside the reach of the lapping wavelets, then she put forth one foot. "Bugh! but it's cold," she exclaimed.

"'Fraid cat! 'Fraid cat!" cried Judy striking out vigorously for deeper water to join half a dozen others in for their afternoon swim.

Lest she should prove too much of a tenderfoot in the presence of strangers Kathleen ventured into the shallow water itself and finally waded out far enough to feel that she had accomplished her duty, then, with Judy, she scampered drippingly back to the shack to hurry into her bloomers and jumper that she might be in time for her work at the Wigwam.

"It was so good of Miss Keene to take me on the force of workers who earn half their expenses," she said as she gave a quick turn to her red tie.

"If it wasn't defrauding others I'd like to try it myself," returned Judy. "I'll tell you, Kath, what I can

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do. I will help you any time that you happen to be a little late in the morning or any other time that you chance to be in a hurry."

"Imagine you washing dishes and setting tables," returned Kathleen.

"Imagine me? Why not me? Why shouldn't Judy Falkner do it as well as Kathleen Gilman? Are you casting aspersions on my ability or my sisterly spirit?"

"Not either, but it seems rather droll to imagine you paring potatoes and shelling peas."

"Our camp makes all girls free and equal. It is the outward and visible expression of an inward and spiritual independence. We are all girls, just girls, not to be distinguished as different because one's father happens to be a millionaire and another's a poorly paid clerk. Nothing counts here but character. There's the *tirra-lirra*. Get out."

Kathleen darted away at the sound of the whistle which summoned her to the big central building, and soon she was busy with half a dozen others in setting tables and helping to serve the evening meal. What appetites the girls had and how jolly they were! Even the washing of the dishes was in the manner of an amusement, for the girls sang blithely as they washed and rinsed and wiped, stopping their songs only to chatter and laugh over the day's happenings.



"What a lot of things you do," remarked Kathleen. "Do you get through with them all?"

"Deed we do," responded Molly Ludlow who was briskly polishing a plate. "Everything is scheduled. There are the bugle calls and whistles to summon us, and we can see what is on for each day by the bulletin board where everything is posted. It is really something like a school only we learn to play as well as to study. Now, to-day after our morning's work was over we had our swimming lesson, then came basket and bead work, then those who work here came to prepare for dinner. After we had finished the dishes came rest hour and this afternoon we went on a hike. There is something going on all the time so we don't have a chance to get into mischief or to be lonely and discontented."

"Can't we ever do anything except what we are bidden?" inquired Annabel Ladd, a new arrival. "Must we always be managed as if we were in an institution?"

Molly laughed. "Anything more unlike an institution could not be imagined. We do anything we like so long as our special councilor approves. The reason we come to camp is because we want to do campy, outdoor things, but it wouldn't be common sense if we expected to do foolish or undesirable things."

Annabel gave her head a little toss. "I think it's horrid that we have to ask permission. It is treating us like babies."

"Why, no it isn't." Molly was loyal to her camp. "It is to safeguard us. I don't see why we girls should expect to be endowed with the wisdom of Solomon. Why, last year—let me tell you what happened. Two or three of the girls thought it would be a lark to walk to town, hire a motor car and go for a spin on their own hook. There wasn't any special motive in their wanting to do it, only a sort of desire to kick over the traces and do something wild and bold and giddy. Well, my child, they got their reward, for they came near to having a frightful accident; the car broke down and they were stranded away off on a lonely country road. They had to walk miles before they could get any farmer willing to take his horses out at night after they were through their day's work; but they managed at last to find one who consented to bring them home in his wagon at a fabulous price, and it was eleven o'clock, and after, before they reached camp. To say that Miss Keene was worried doesn't express it. We were all scared to death. You see they had permission to take the walk, but the ride was their own secret performance, and that was what they got for it. Well, it was a lesson to them and all of us. That they weren't killed was pure good luck, for the

car skidded and they went over into a ditch,—fortunately not a very deep one.”

“Just suppose it had been fatal, how awful for Miss Keene,” Kathleen exclaimed.

“How awful for her, their families and all of us,” returned Molly. “I tell you we have been pretty careful since then, for accidents sometimes happen with all our caution. You can see why Miss Keene is particular that we should not go any distance without a councilor, or at least a Torch Bearer.”

“Are those girls here this year?” inquired Annabel.

“No, thank fortune, they are not,” Molly told her.

At this moment came a sudden crash of china and every girl rushed to the other side of the broad verandah where the tables stood. There on the floor sat a stout, flaxen-haired girl in the midst of a scattering of broken dishes.

“Why, Evelyn,” said Molly, “what did happen?”

“Speaking of accidents,” put in Kathleen.

“I don’t know how I did it,” Evelyn began. “I just slipped somehow as I was carrying my tray of dishes.” She surveyed the destruction with rueful countenance.

“Never mind,” said Molly soothingly. “Maybe there aren’t a great many broken. We’ll help to gather them up. Did you hurt yourself?”

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"Only my feelings, but they are terribly shattered," Evelyn answered with a whimsical smile.

"It's well it's no worse," Molly told her. "See, there are only three or four pieces really broken and those are cups and saucers. You can easily buy more at the Five and Ten. Miss Keene gets all she can there so we won't have much trouble in replacing things. Let me help you up, Ev."

Good-natured, clumsy Evelyn was soon on her feet. She was always making blunders, always missing her footing and sitting down violently, always dropping something or doing things the wrong way, but she was so jolly and sweet-tempered, so ready to take all the blame that not one in the camp but put the censure anywhere but on the girl herself.

"Some one must have dropped some grease on the floor and that made your foot slip," declared Molly, looking around for some evidence to which she could trace the mishap.

"No, it was just sheer awkwardness," insisted Evelyn. "My hands are so boneless and fat that I think they wobble things about when I try to carry them."

The clatter had brought Miss Penniman from the kitchen. She was the councilor who had charge of the domestic end of affairs. She smiled when she saw Evelyn's expression. "It was one of my clumsinesses, Miss Penniman," said the girl.

"Then I'm not very much worried," Miss Penniman told her. "Much broken, Evelyn?"

"Not so much as last time: two cups and saucers utterly demolished, and the handle 'gone from a third cup. That's all," she added cheerfully. "I'm awfully sorry, Miss Penniman, but I can get some more the next time any one goes to town. It was fifty cents last time; this time it will be only thirty, with a saucer to the good."

The sound of a shrill whistle caused the girls to scamper back to their work. Judy came running up the path. "Not through yet?" she cried. "Hurry up, Kath. There'll be something doing down at Pine Cradle pretty soon, and you don't want to miss any of it." She caught up a towel and between them the remaining dishes were dried in a jiffy. Then each girl flew to her lodge to make ready for Pine Cradle's entertainment.

"You see," said Judy from under the confines of a clean jumper which she was putting over her head, "one of our summer stunts is giving entertainments. It gives us something to work for, enlivens our evenings and is great fun. The old girls give shows to the new ones and vice versa, then each lodge or tent gives a special function to the rest. If the lodge happens to be a very new one we call it a house-warming and make it a particularly fine affair. Now our lodge,

Minnewawa, is brand new, ergo, it is up to us to begin right away to think up something which will do us credit. Thinking caps are to be donned at once in addition to the rest of our costumes."

"They are a sort of tarn-cap, aren't they?" remarked Kathleen; "invisible to all but the wearer. Here goes mine." She made a movement as if adjusting a cap upon her head and turned to Judy. "Can you discern it with your mind's eye? Is it becoming?"

"Immensely," laughed Judy. "It suits you much better than mine does me. I can never get it at quite the right angle. There is one thing, however, that the wearing of it has immediately suggested: we are obliged to think up decorations for Minnewawa, and the sooner we get at it the better. What do you suggest, Kath? You should be sufficiently familiar with your lodge by this time to know its requirements."

"We need another shelf or two for our favorite books, and a sort of table. I could put them up if I had the boards. We could tack birch bark on the sides to give them a rustic, woodland air. Then we must make some sort of hanging baskets to place in those openings, we can fill them with ferns and wild flowers, and we will dig up a couple of little cedar trees to set each side the door-step. I'd love to make a totem pole, too, and—and—and——"

"Goodness me!" Judy broke in. "I should think

that was enough to begin on. I never knew such a wealth of ideas as you can give expression to once you get the cap on your head. We shall be sure to get honors for the most charmingly decorated abode. There is nothing like having an art student for your running mate."

"What particular form of amusement do we get from the Pine Cradlers to-night?"

"I don't believe I'd better tell you. It will be that much more fun for you if you don't know. They consulted me because I am an old stager, but you, as a new arrival, should be given a surprise. We must be sure to take notes, Kath, so when our turn comes we can outdo them. We shall want something strictly original. I must go now, for I promised to help the girls with their costuming. Come when you hear the whistle, and don't forget to bring your lantern. It is light enough now, but it won't be when we come back. Make yourself at home, Miss Gilman."

She went out and after watching her through the trees about whose tops the sunset rays still lingered, Kathleen turned her eyes toward the shimmering lake gleaming rosily between the branches of the white pines. A saucy squirrel chattered at her as he whisked from one tree to another, and from the woods beyond came the thrillingly sweet evening song of a hermit thrush. The girl gave a long sigh of content. "It is

going to be truly satisfying," she told herself. "Just nice girls, sympathetic councilors and dear Mother Nature. One's soul should have a chance to grow in this atmosphere." She stood looking out, her elbows on the ledge till the sound of the whistle summoned her forth, then, lantern in hand, she joined the groups of girls making their way to Pine Cradle.



## CHAPTER II

### MINNEWAWA ENTERTAINS

**T**O Kathleen her first swimming lesson was a great occasion. She dreaded it, yet was eager to overcome her timidity. This committing herself to such a big body of water as the lake required all her courage.

The teacher was inspiring, the girls encouraging, yet she came out anything but cheered. "I'll never learn," she confided to Judy. "I flopped around like a wet hen and kicked; that was about all."

"Nonsense," protested Judy. "In a week you will be diving."

"Not I. Plunging off that board as you do looks as impossible to me as flying through the air."

"You old goose! You haven't a bit of pep about you."

"Would I were a true goose," groaned Kathleen; "then I could swim without half trying."

Judy laughed. "Chirk up, old girl. It isn't like you to balk at things like this. Remember that this is only your first attempt. Bear in mind the oft quoted: 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.'"

"Oh, I'm going to do the trying all right, but I don't count much on results."

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"I do. I know Kathleen Gilman too well to lose confidence in her this early in the game. Come on; I'll race you to the lodge, then we'll talk about what Minnewawa shall do to show off. One, two, three, go!"

They sped with flying feet up the hill, reaching their lodge all in a glow. "You see," said Judy hanging her wet garments on the line outside, "we must have something that will do us proud, not only in the way of entertaining but in decorations. We must get the others together, and all five of us can make suggestions. Miss Wade should be rich in ideas, for she is musical, and while Betty Morrison isn't particularly brilliant, she is a nice child and will fall in with anything we may decide upon."

"What about Etta Bowles?"

"She may have an idea or two; still those two are only Wood Gatherers and we mustn't expect too much of them; it is from Miss Wade that we should get our best help. I'd like to get in some of the other girls, but as this is Minnewawa's special show we should confine ourselves to those who occupy the one lodge. Don't you think so?"

"I suppose we should, but it is going to be something of a puzzle to hit on things that we all can do well."

"Maybe not. There is no telling till you start a

thing. I've often been surprised to discover hidden talents where you least expected."

It took more than one consultation and a mysterious trip to the village before the girls could arrange affairs to suit them, but on a certain mild June night there was great excitement at Minnewawa. Judy and Kathleen were busy behind the lodge mysteriously disposing of certain articles which they wanted out of sight of sharp eyes.

"We mustn't let them suspect that we have ice-cream so I think we'd better hide the freezer in the bushes," said Judy. "Just give me a hand with it, Kathleen. My, but it's heavy," she went on as the two dragged the big bucket to a screened spot.

"This pile of boards left from the building makes a fine hiding place," said Kathleen. "We can put the rest of the things here and not a soul will suspect. I'll get the cakes and the plates of fudge so they will be all ready. The boards make a nice dry place to set them on, and we can serve the things from here perfectly. Betty said she would see to the plates and spoons."

"I will go and look after them so as to be sure," Judy offered. "Betty is a nice child, but she is so excited that she may forget some of the things that she has been charged to do. It is a great occasion for those two youngsters, and we can't expect them to be

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entirely responsible. They will do exactly what they are told if the orders are to be carried out immediately, but given any time between, I am not so sure."

She went off and presently came back with Betty, each bearing a pile of saucers. Etta followed with paper napkins and a supply of spoons.

"We thought we'd better get everything together right here so as to waste no time in serving when the time comes," said Judy. "You are right, Kathleen, this is a perfectly fine place to keep the things, so near the lodge and yet out of sight. We can set the saucers along this top board and everything will go very easily. Come along now; Miss Wade is beginning to light up and it is going to look perfectly great."

Having arranged everything to her satisfaction Kathleen followed the others back to the shack to get into the costume she was to wear for the performance.

It was not long after the girls had departed, leaving their refreshments in supposed safety, that a bright-eyed little squirrel came around upon an investigating tour. He peered down from the branches overhead, whisked round the trunk of the overhanging tree and finally jumped down upon the pile of boards. Next he ran along the edge sniffing as he went. The ice-cream freezer did not interest him a bit, the cakes might be worth considering if nothing else better came his way, but the two plates of fudge, ah, there he found some-

thing. "Nuts? Do I smell nuts? Queer places these two-legged creatures take to hide their things. Here they have imbedded their nuts in this mass of brown and sugary stuff. Well, I can pick them out; I suppose one doesn't need very sharp teeth for that. There are no shells to crack and I can make short business of it." Short business he did make of it, eating all he could and carrying away the rest. He had plenty of time for he was quite undisturbed while the process was going on, and he went off at last with his appetite so satisfied that he did not for a moment give his attention to the cakes.

Meantime all went merrily at the lodge. The moon, rising over the lake and sending its silver beams down between the fringed boughs of the white pines, was quite cast in the shade by the colored lanterns dotting the dark green along the path. Another row of lanterns bobbed beneath the eaves, while upon the ledge at the front of the shack the girls had set at intervals tumblers in which little lights were burning. Judy had borrowed this idea from Italy where she had seen the lighted wicks floating in oil at more than one festa. Every electric lantern that could be borrowed was put to use. Some twinkled from the small cedar trees set each side the door; another shone out like a star from the top of the totem pole Kathleen had labored hard to make; others lighted up the name

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Minnewawa wrought in daisy chains and looped across the top of the doorway.

As the guests arrived in hurrying groups there were cries of "Fairyland! How lovely! Three cheers for Minnewawa; she has outdone us all." "My, how those girls must have worked," was the last comment heard by the busy whisperers making their final preparations behind the curtain of Indian blankets.

"All ready?" asked Judy in a low tone.

There was a murmured response from the four queer looking figures before her and they filed out. Judy, in military array with a large black muff for a hat, carried a baton which she wielded dexterously. Kathleen, stuffed out to abnormal proportions, waddled after with a dish-pan for a drum. Betty Morrison essayed to play the megaphone, Etta Bowles piped shrilly upon a tin whistle while Miss Wade brought up the rear with a comb. Strange costuming and burnt cork produced such weird effects that not a girl was recognizable. Kathleen might have been a puffy-faced German, for she had stuffed out her cheeks as well as her person, and had arranged her tresses so they appeared as a shock of short hair standing on end. Judy, with a fierce waxed moustache and beetling brows, performed wonderful gymnastics with her baton. Betty Morrison looked like a little, black-haired, emotional Italian. Etta's blonde locks were made to appear as lanky as

possible and all the lines of her face were drawn downward so that she presented a most lachrymose appearance. Miss Wade gave the impression of a soulful genius with shaggy mane standing out in curls from her head. She discoursed passionately upon the comb.

As each number was concluded Kathleen dived clumsily under the curtain to produce a huge sheet of brown paper which announced the next number and which was fastened with much ado to the side of the shack in view of the audience. The level space in front of the lodge afforded a place for seating the visitors who squatted on the ground, sat on camp stools or on the rocks as suited them. The broad step furnished a stage for Judy and the soloists. In front of it the band was grouped. The first selection, "It's a long, long way to Tipperary," was given with much energy, the tin whistle doing its best and the dish-pan with smashing effect emphasizing the climax. Judy's contortions and Kathleen's facial expressions convulsed the audience. A comb solo was greatly applauded, so were the recitations given with much effort in an elocutionary manner. Betty was discovered to be an excellent mimic and gave a monologue which brought down the house. As for Etta Bowles, after much urging by Miss Wade she confessed that she could sing coon songs and had brought her banjo with her, so hers was another unlooked for act.

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But the crowning performance, and at the same time the most artistic, was an Indian dance with its accompanying song which Kathleen had learned from one of her fellow students at the Art school she had attended the previous year. It was something quite new to them all, and though Kathleen had not a voice that was remarkable in any way, she threw herself into the part with all the enthusiasm she possessed and made something of a sensation. She wore a correct Indian dress, upon which Judy had spent much time and thought and which she insisted Kathleen should wear on this occasion.

"You were simply great, Kath," said Judy as the curtain dropped for the last time. "I just knew you could make a hit if you tried, for all your protests. Any one with your imagination and sentiment couldn't fail to. I am so pleased, for I did want you to make an impression upon the councilors and the new girls."

"Well, you see," Kathleen answered, "I made up my mind to forget Kathleen Gilman if I could, and to imagine myself Thurénsara, an Indian maiden."

"Well, you certainly succeeded," returned Judy. "While Miss Wade is dishing up the ice-cream we'll get ready to pass the cakes and the fudge. Betty and Etta can take care of the ice-cream end. Where is the fudge, by the way?"

"Right there where you saw me put everything. I



laid papers over the plates, and stuck them under those projecting planks."

Judy proceeded to investigate. "Some one has found them," she cried. "They have been meddled with. Every blessed nut has been picked out and only crumbs and broken pieces of chocolate are left."

"It doesn't seem possible that any one could do such a thing as that even for a joke," declared Kathleen, leaving the cakes to go over to where Judy was looking with a puzzled expression at the ravages made upon their refreshments. "Come here, girls," she cried to those who were waiting to serve the saucers of ice-cream. "Tell us what you think of this?"

Miss Wade turned her scrutiny upon the despoiled sweets. "Squirrels," she announced with conviction. "It is just the sort of thing they do. They have pilfered our peanuts, stolen our almonds and picked the nuts from our icing. They have even pulled our sweaters to pieces to make nests, the mischievous little wretches!"

"I haven't a doubt that you have guessed the culprit," Judy agreed, "and there is no way of punishing him nor of appealing to his better nature, so we shall simply have to accept the inevitable and strike the fudge out of our menu for to-night."

The others reluctantly admitted that this was all that could be done, but Miss Wade made such a funny

apologetic speech to the assembled guests and Judy was moved to invent a ridiculous dance which she called the Squirrel dance, that the company declared they would rather have missed the fudge than the impromptu performances.

Kathleen fingered Judy's Indian dress lovingly as she folded it away. Judy had spent many hours in making the embroideries, and the two friends had passed happy evenings in thinking out appropriate designs. "Doesn't it mean a lot?" said Kathleen.

"No one who is not a Camp Fire Girl can have the least idea how much it does mean," returned Judy. "When are you going to begin yours, Kathleen?"

"I hope I can begin it while I am here. My old ceremonial dress serves, of course, but to have one which expresses as much as yours does is my dream."

"I am almost sorry that mine is finished," Judy said. "It was such a happy interest, and we had such good times thinking out the different symbols. You mustn't outdo me, Kath; I'll never forgive you if you do."

"What a speech for a Camp Fire Girl to make and an aspirant for Torch Bearer honors, too."

"Of course I didn't mean that as it sounded," Judy hastened to protest, "only you are so clever with your ideas and your fingers, too, that I saw myself quite cast in the shade by your dress when it is done."

"You may well add when it is done. I shall be years doing it, and I should like to know who casts me in the shade most times in her dress."

"Oh, well, precious old sister Thurénsera, I won't be a pig about it. Go ahead and make your dress as beautiful as you possibly can; you deserve it. There is no spirit of emulation that shall enter into our friendship if I can help it. One of the good things about camp life is the fact that we all dress alike and don't have to weep green tears over the attire of others."

"I love green tears," laughed Kathleen. "I am not going to weep tears of any color while I am up here, not if I can help it," she added.

"I will tell you who seems to me a person who might go around with a tear vial," remarked Judy, "and that is Annabel Ladd. I am afraid she is going to be the fly in our ointment."

Kathleen laughed again. "Green tears and human flies; what wild flights of fancy."

Judy joined in the laugh against herself, but pursued the subject. "Well, at any rate she isn't disposed to take camp life as she should, and I am afraid Miss Keene is secretly sorry she is here. She is quite a new girl in our midst and seems to have missed the spirit of our Camp Fire."

"Perhaps she will not stay. Does Miss Keene ever send a girl away?"

"I have never known her to do that and I don't believe she would. She would think that such a girl needed her influence and the teaching of the Camp Fire more than any other. No, my dear, Annabel is with us to stay unless she leaves voluntarily."

"She will not do that because I heard her say that her parents had gone to California and that she would have to stay here whether she wanted to or not. She gave us to understand that it was a case of not wanting."

"Cheerful little playmate," remarked Judy. "Didn't that make you furious?"

"It made all of us so. I wish you could have heard Molly Ludlow giving her a setting down, then Annabel was furious and walked off with that supercilious expression she loves to wear. I really think, Judy, that she considers you the only one who has any right to share the camp with her, and that she chafes terribly under the necessity of doing such menial work as is required of her."

"Poor, unbaked, little creature! What a lot she has to learn before she has a true sense of values. How she will despise herself some day, her present self, I mean."

"Just as I do myself of three years or even less time ago."

"And as I do that horrid old Judy Falkner I once used to know. Goodness knows I am not perfect yet,

by any means, but I do think I am not quite so hateful. I am trying to shift myself round to get my mother's point of view. I catch glimpses of it once in a while, but I am afraid I shall never quite see things as she does."

"You are afraid you never shall?"

"I don't mean that at all, at least I do mean it in a way. I really want to get her point of view even if I do not sympathize with it. I should like to do that and at the same time I should like her to understand my point of view, then we could agree to disagree, each making concession when it seemed best."

"Isn't that precisely what does happen? Doesn't your mother make concessions in allowing you to come up here every summer rather than to stay with her? And wasn't it a great concession to allow me to spend last winter with you in your own home?"

Judy chose to ignore this last suggestion. "Of course it is a concession on her part to let me come up here, but she believes it is for my health's sake, and I am sure I wore myself to a frazzle last winter doing society stunts just to please her."

"That is exactly what I meant, so you are drawing nearer together. It seems to me that she is much more interested now in the things that please you than she was a year ago."

"That is because you were with us. She heard us

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discussing all sorts of interesting things and couldn't help but see. Before that I never had a soul to talk over my affairs with. Mother always looked bored to extinction and father would try to look interested but I could see that he was dying to get away, so there you have it. Oh, there is no use talking, you have been a precious boon to me."

"And what about the boon you have been to me?"

"If it has been a mutual benefit society so much the better; then nobody has any debt to pay."

Kathleen was about to declare differently when a plaintive voice from the other side of the partition spoke: "Aren't you girls *ever* going to sleep? I can hear your whispering 'wishy, wishy wishy,' and I believe you would keep it up till daylight if some one didn't stop you. Taps sounded and lights were out long ago. Do please go to sleep."

This appeal could not be disregarded, and the two ceased their whispered talk. Judy was soon asleep; but Kathleen, excited beyond her wont, lay awake watching the moonbeams sifting through the pine needles, and listening to the night sounds about her, the lapping of the ripples upon the shores of the lake, the sighing of the breeze through the trees, the distant hooting of an owl, the rustling of some wild creature in the bushes. Beyond Minnewawa was deep forest which the girl's imagination peopled with such night

prowlers as might well occupy the deep and dark places. She had grown to feel very strongly the appeal of this free, wild life and smiled as she listened, and as she thought of the time, not so very long ago, when she had lived a life whose horizon was so limited that she seldom saw the dawn of hope nor the sunshine of content. She had been a dissatisfied, self-pitying young person whose ambitions rarely rose above the level of material things, and whose dreams were of rather poor stuff.

"I was ignorant, plain ignorant," she told herself as she thought of her contempt for her little home village of Brightwood. She had always called it ugly; dear little Brightwood snuggled down at the foot of the mountains. She had imagined herself unloved when there were the warm-hearted Hoveys right across the street, and in her own home the hidden heart of her aunt. She had thought life unbeautiful with its wonders all about her. Well, being a Camp Fire Girl changed all that, for here she was with life so full, the future so mysteriously, excitingly hopeful, and the present! But she did not finish with the present before she was fast asleep, and did not awaken until that same saucy marauding squirrel came to sit upon the ledge and scold her roundly, probably because she had failed to provide him with a fresh supply of nuts, while a chorus of birds announced the dawn of another day.

## CHAPTER III

### A LONG HIKE

*"O who's the tried and trusty one  
Will walk a mile with me?"*

Judy sang as her face appeared round the corner of the lodge. "Only, Kathleen, my dear, for one mile read five or ten. How would you like to climb the hill to the old church this fair June day?"

"Hm?" Kathleen laid down the letter she was reading and looked at Judy with an abstracted air.

"The old church. Don't you want to go there to-day? What's the matter, Kath? Come back to earth. You look dazed. Anything wrong? Bad news?"

"No indeed. All is well. I was absorbed in Aunt Milly's letter, that's all. She sends her love to you. Yes, of course I would love to go to the old church. I've wanted to ever since I heard about it. Who is going?"

"Only Miss Armitage, I think. If we start right away we should be back by dinner time."

"All right. I'm ready." Kathleen folded up her letter and thrust it into her blouse.

"We are to meet Miss Armitage at Partridge Nest. She said she would wait there for us."



"I love the names of the lodges," said Kathleen, "and I know the reasons for most of them, but I don't believe I ever heard just why Partridge Nest was called so."

"It is one of the first built, and when they began to clear away the underbrush they found a partridge nest, so it seemed an appropriate name for more than one reason."

"Were there eggs in the nest?"

"No, but there were fledglings, and Miss Keene would not let the work go on till she found the nest empty. She kept the nest and you will see it as the much prized ornament of the lodge."

"I think the name of Miss Keene's lodge is excellent. Shutanka;—to meet in council together, for she told me your first meets were held there."

"Yes, we had tents only, that first year, and Miss Keene still clings to hers, so do some of the others."

"It is more primitive, perhaps, still I love our lodge."

"So do I. There is Miss Armitage on the lookout for us."

They were joined by this young councilor, a tall noble looking girl with fair hair and earnest eyes. Her mouth showed a sense of humor, and her hands strength and grace. "Well, Owa Manitu, have you decided to go with us?" was her greeting to Kathleen.

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"I am delighted to go, but why Owa Manitu, Miss Armitage? My Camp Fire name is Thurénsera, Dawn of Day."

"And a lovely name, but you could as appropriately be called Drawing Maiden, couldn't you?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so, only when I chose my name it wouldn't have been significant, for I have been a drawing maiden only about a year."

"How did you happen to choose Thurénsera? I am always interested to know the girls' motives in choosing their names."

"It was because the Camp Fire meant a new dawn of day for me, and because the daffodils, which seem to me like cups of sunshine, brought me the message I chose a daffodil for my symbol."

"I like that individual touch. It means so much when one can go to actual experiences for a name and symbol."

"Kathleen has made such lovely daffodil designs," Judy broke in.

"But I think they are all too conventional, and not suggestive enough of the Indian symbolisms," returned Kathleen. "I am studying up Indian lore now so as to make some really good designs full of meaning."

"Perhaps I can help you," said Miss Armitage. "While we have been talking I have thought how very rich in symbolic material your name is. There is

the rising sun, the morning star, and your own special symbol, all of which you could use, combining them as you might choose, or taking them separately."

"Lovely," cried Kathleen. "You have given me some new ideas, Miss Armitage, and I shall certainly work them up for my new ceremonial dress."

"I should love to see what you make out of them," Miss Armitage responded interestedly.

"And I'd love to show them to you and get your advice," returned Kathleen heartily.

They had reached the top of their first hill whose path led up from the lake, but there were other and longer hill paths to climb before they should reach their destination. Part of the way led along the main road, past white farmhouses and open fields. The sun beat down hot upon their heads before they were half-way so they sat down under a broad boughed tree by the roadside to rest. Birds sang blithely from wood and copse, a winding brooklet murmured a contented sort of accompaniment to the bird songs. From afar off came the subdued hum of a planing mill, and the honk of an automobile once in a while broke in upon the sylvan sounds.

"The sound of that little brook does make me so thirsty," Judy complained. "I suppose it wouldn't be quite safe to drink from it."

"We'll stop at the first farmhouse and ask for a

drink," observed Miss Armitage. "If we expect to get back in time for dinner we must be moving."

"If we don't get back what then?" Judy queried.

"We shall have to forage by the way."

"Good! Don't let us try to get back, Miss Armitage; it will be so much more of an adventure if we trust to luck to get something to eat. Don't you think so, Kathleen?"

"I'm agreed if Miss Armitage is."

"We won't try, then. If we find we can get back, well and good, if not we will trust to fate to sustain us."

"How much further do you think it is?" Judy asked.

"Getting tired?"

"No, but I would just like to know so we can estimate the time."

"We will ask at the farmhouse where we stop for water. Perhaps we can learn of a short cut. We shall want to spend a little time examining the old church, and we shall want to take a little rest, too."

They soon came upon a neat farmhouse whose doorway was fringed out with gay flower borders where bees boomed busily among the blossoms. "This looks encouraging," remarked Miss Armitage.

They went in the gate and around to the side of the house where they heard voices. A pleasant young woman bade her little girl go to the well for fresh

water, and seemed to feel it quite an event that any one from the girls' camp should call upon her. She asked many questions, and regarded their costumes with interest and some surprise; later, in a friendly way, she showed them a short cut across her own corn-fields to a piece of road which would take them to their destination and save half a mile. That they should walk a distance of five miles for sheer pleasure was a matter of real astonishment to her, and she could scarcely believe them when they said they would rather walk than ride back.

"You don't mean it?" she exclaimed incredulously. "I've heard a lot of funny things about that camp, and I guess I'll have to believe them." She gave a comprehensive glance at the girls' bloomers, and they went off chuckling.

"Wasn't she deliciously frank?" said Judy gleefully. "She liked us and meant to be friendly enough but she wasn't going to let us think she quite approved of us. Her New England conscience would never permit that."

"I haven't a doubt but the camp is a great subject of comment among the good folk of the neighborhood," Miss Armitage remarked. "We are such an innovation and contradict all their preconceived ideas of what is proper and right for girls, but they will become used to our point of view in time, and we shall do

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them good in lifting their minds out of ruts. Another long hill, girls; we must take it slowly."

Having reached the summit of this hill they saw ahead of them the last steep incline crowned by the old white church with its quaint belfry rigidly outlined against the clear blue sky. At the foot of the hill stood a neat farmhouse where they would find the key of the church. Their knock was answered by a delicate-featured woman who opened the door into a speckless hallway beyond which they could see rooms where old mahogany and shining brasses held their own.

In reply to their questions they were told that the old church, built in the eighteenth century, had been restored and that a service was held once a month, but that because of its isolated position it was not feasible to open it oftener to worshippers.

One last mighty pull and the pilgrims reached their goal, breathless but ecstatic. "What a view!" they exclaimed with one accord.

"The whole Presidential range and seven lakes," announced Miss Armitage after a moment's survey. "One can realize that outlook from a high mountain when the kingdoms of the world were spread out before our Lord."

After a rest upon the church steps, during which they feasted their eyes upon the scene before them,

they entered the church itself, explored its dim corners, sat in the old box pews, examined the ancient Bible on the pulpit, and finally climbed the worn steps to the belfry from which an even more extended view was to be had. A wheezy old melodeon still stood in the little gallery used by the choir. They touched the yellowed keys and tried to pump out an ancient hymn tune, but the old instrument was too far gone to give more than a few squeaky notes, and they went on down the stairs, noting the frayed bell rope and the faded notices on the whitewashed wall of the vestibule, and so on out into the sunshine and sweet air.

They were tired enough to lie down in the long dry grass at the side of the church. For a few minutes they talked of the old church, picturing the congregation of its early days and recalling its history as it had been told them. But very soon Judy and Miss Armitage fell asleep while Kathleen, left to her own thoughts, harked back to the subject of the letter she had received that morning. It needed consideration and there was reason for the abstraction she had shown when Judy came upon her. Here was a question which she alone could decide, for it meant the plan of her whole future.

She drew the letter from her blouse and reread it. "Kathleen, dear child," it said, "we have a proposition to make, but because we know you will want time to

consider it we are writing now. Your Uncle Addison and I hope very much that when you have left the camp you will come to us to remain until you shall go into a home of your own. We feel that while we cannot offer you the excitements of the city we can give you love and protection, and you need not miss your Camp Fire, as you know the Nest Builders are here each year and you could affiliate yourself with them. There could be no question of obligation on your side, for nothing we could do would ever compensate for what you have done for us in restoring our dear children, and you can be assured that to feel that the daughter of my dear sister would be spared battling alone with the world would be no small thing to me. The storms have blown so roughly upon me in the past that I long to shelter you from them. Moreover, it would make us very happy to look forward to your companionship for as many years as may be, so, Kathleen, dear, please think it over and let us know as soon as you have really come to an unalterable decision."

As Kathleen lay in the long grass in the deep shadow of the old church it seemed as if she were at the top of the world which lay outspread before her. Seven lakes they had counted and had looked upon the glorious range of mountains, Mount Washington towering above the others. The kingdoms of the world! Could



they have looked so to Him to whom they were offered in Palestine in the hour of temptation? Was this her hour of temptation, and this the world which was offered her? Should she take it? She must weigh the matter carefully before she even told Judy about it. It would mean a very different life from that spent for ten years, and more, with her father's sister in Brightwood. Strange that of the two the latter now appeared to her the more useful life. In Florida she would have few duties and no cares. She would need to make new friends. She would have less opportunity to develop her talents, and above all she would be obliged to give up her independence that grew dearer to her the more she considered it.

On the other hand she would be surrounded by comfort and loving consideration. She would be with those bound to her by blood ties more closely than any others, her aunt, and her two little cousins, Emily and Alex. Her thoughts suddenly bounded back to Brightwood to her boy cousin there. Her dreams of being of use to Jimmy would have to be given up. She would be separated from Judy, from those who had become a part of her life. She gave so long a sigh that Judy, just rousing from her slumbers, turned over and put forth a hand.

"Just waking up, Kath? I've had a lovely nap, but oh, I am beginning to feel the pangs of hunger."

Miss Armitage, upon the other side, sat up. "The noon hour is almost up," she said looking at her watch. "We shall have to begin our homeward way pretty soon, but fortunately it will be down hill more than up. Was ever such a quiet spot? I slept like a baby. Who'll have some chocolate?" She dived into her bag to produce the supply she had taken care to bring.

"You have saved my life," cried Judy holding out her hand for her share. "I could devour a New England boiled dinner, pork, cabbage, turnips and all, and that is saying a great deal."

"I rather like a boiled dinner," confessed Miss Armitage, "though I didn't when I was a child. I have grown to appreciate its merits only since I have been coming up here to camp. Outdoor life does make one so outrageously hungry that anything really eatable appeals to one."

"Never again will I go off this way for hours without taking a hoard of something like candy or crackers," said Judy munching her chocolate. "I suppose this is really the most nourishing thing, but on a hot day it might have the disadvantage of getting gooey and smeary. To-day is so perfect that nothing like that has happened. Did you ever breathe more delicious air?"

"Nothing could be purer," rejoined Miss Armitage.

"Ready, girls? Shall we start? I think this bite will sustain us till we can find a kindly housewife who will give us some bread and milk."

"I wouldn't dare to ask the lady of the keys," remarked Judy. "She has such a delicate remote air, a fine sort of dignified reserve. I am sure she would open that delightful corner cupboard we saw through the doorway, and would set forth all her best china and silver. She would probably open her preserves and make a raid upon her store of fruit cake. She isn't a person to whom one could ever think of offering money, and we never could trespass upon her hospitality."

"I think you are quite right," Miss Armitage agreed. "We will look for some one less like her own eggshell china. I wonder what our dainty friend does find to entertain her during the long bitterly cold winters up here. It seems such a remote spot, so far from the outside world."

"I saw a pile of the newest magazines and some of the latest books on the beautiful mahogany table," Kathleen observed.

"Ah, then, she has resources."

"And I am sure she does stacks of fancy work," remarked Judy. "Notice that table cover and those crochet mats when we go back."

Miss Armitage promised to do so. They returned the key, stopped for a few minutes' chat and came

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away feeling that they had found at least one interesting personality during their walk.

"I really am beginning to envy her," said Miss Armitage as they pursued their way. "To think of the uninterrupted hours she has to use as she chooses, and she has interests, the doings of the farm, and a few neighbors. I should like to have seen her husband."

"If he is anything like her cat," remarked Judy, "he is dear."

They stopped at more than one farmhouse before they met a response to their calls. "Every one must be either asleep or away," said Miss Armitage when their third summons met no answer.

"And I am getting hungrier and hungrier every minute," sighed Judy. "I doubt if I am able to reach camp alive. You will have to leave me in the woods and cover me up with leaves."

"Poor babe," commiserated Miss Armitage. "We will find something to sustain us if we have to milk the cows ourselves."

"I will drag my faltering footsteps a few rods further before I faint by the way," Judy assured her, "but I trust the good Samaritan will not be long in appearing upon the scene."

"Cheer up, sister," Kathleen encouraged her. "Think how good it will be when we do get it."

"If corn were ripe, or turnips, or any kind of garden

'sass,'” Judy went on, “I would be capable of plundering a garden and eating almost anything raw, but up in these diggings nothing is ready before July.”

“Lettuce and radishes, perhaps, but they would be poor things to satisfy a ravenous creature like yourself,” Miss Armitage declared.

Judy drew a doleful sigh and pretended that she had come to the limit of her patience. “I am going to do something desperate,” she declared. “If we don’t find something or somebody at the next house I am going to break in and help myself. I shall always have sympathy after this for any one who pilfers things to eat. If I can’t get into a house I can find a milk house, maybe, and I will crawl in and gorge myself on cream. Why aren’t apples ripe in June, or pears or some kind of fruit?”

“We might find some wild strawberries if we should turn off and hunt for them,” Miss Armitage told her, “but I think the surer way is to keep on till we reach a house where we can get something more substantial.”

Judy consented, but lapsed into silence, and they strode along the dusty road, presently seeing ahead a small white house nestled down in its shelter of trees.

“There!” exclaimed Kathleen who was the first to spy it. “Now we are all right. Somebody must be at home. The whole world can’t have gone gadding to-day.”

"I can tell you one thing," returned Judy grimly, "if no persons are at home I shall kill their ox or their ass or their dog or their house cat or anything that is theirs and I shall make a fire and cook it."

"I never knew such wild threats," replied Miss Armitage laughing. "If you had simply started in with chicken it would not have sounded half so impossible."

"Oh, do you think they would give us chicken?" cried Judy with such real eagerness that the other two shouted.

They were not long in coming up to a white paling fence whose gate was closed. They had no difficulty, however, in lifting the latch and getting to the doorway which was fairly neat and which showed a few old-fashioned flowers of the hardy sort. Miss Armitage knocked, first not very vigorously, and next loudly. No response.

"Don't tell me there is no one at home here," cried Judy in despair. "What is the matter with everybody, do you suppose?"

"There may be a funeral or some unusual event that has taken all the countryside from home," said Miss Armitage. "It isn't time for the county fair, so it can't be that. You girls sit here on the steps of the porch while I go and explore; perhaps I can find some one about the premises."

She went off leaving the two girls to keep each other company. They were tired and faint and were glad enough to rest.

"It doesn't look very promising to me," remarked Judy after a survey of the surroundings. "It hasn't the prosperous air of the house of our lady of the keys. It isn't exactly unkempt, but it looks poor."

"It doesn't look as if it belonged to a millionaire, I must confess," Kathleen agreed. "I see a cat over there on the fence, Judy, and there is a cow in that field."

"I hear chickens, too, so there may be eggs."

The two girls sat, chins in hands, elbows on knees until in a short time they heard voices and directly saw Miss Armitage approaching from the rear of the place while by her side was an old woman in calico frock, gingham apron and sunbonnet. A lank sad-eyed dog followed at her heels.

The girls arose with alacrity and went forward. "A human being at last," Judy ejaculated with fervency. "Thank heaven!"

## CHAPTER IV

### A WAYSIDE FRIEND

"THIS is Miss Mercy Blodgett, girls," Miss Armistage made known the little old lady to Kathleen and Judy, "and she is going to give us something to eat."

"'Twon't be much," the old lady informed them, "but if eggs and bread and butter and milk will satisfy you I guess I've got that much and a few cookies, too, though they ain't quite fresh."

"If you knew how tempting that sounds to a hungry soul, you would not think for a moment that we might not be satisfied," said Judy.

"Are you as hungry as all that?" said the old lady with a smile. "Well, I guess I'd better get to work and set the things out. I hope you'll excuse the looks of things. What with the work indoors and out I don't get a chance to keep the place like I'd ought. Just walk into the sitting-room and make yourselves at home. I gathered the eggs this morning so they're right fresh. How'll you have them, boiled or scrambled?"

The three guests consulted together and finally de-



cided that quicker results would come if the eggs were scrambled.

"Besides," said Judy as Miss Blodgett went out into the kitchen, "we might not all want them boiled the same length of time, and anyway scrambled eggs seem more like real food."

"Where did you find Miss Blodgett, Miss Armitage?" Kathleen questioned.

"At the foot of her garden hoeing corn. She is a little deaf and did not hear me at once when I called."

"Do you suppose she lives here all alone?"

"I didn't have time to ask her. I was too busy in making negotiations for food."

Here Miss Blodgett put her head in the door. "I might give you some fried potatoes if you cared to wait for them," she said.

"Oh, no, please don't bother about getting us anything more," Miss Armitage begged; "we shall have an abundance."

"Won't you let me come out and help you?" Kathleen spoke up.

"Oh, no, child. It won't take a minute. I've got the table all set."

In a few minutes they were summoned to the kitchen where, upon an oilcloth-covered table, their meal was set out: home-made bread, fresh butter, the scrambled eggs, a pitcher of rich milk, a plate of

cookies and a glass dish of honey. Old blue and white china made a pleasant bit of color, and if the tumblers were of cheap glass of a greenish hue and the forks steel pronged, these were small matters.

"My, how good it looks," cried Judy. "Miss Blodgett, you are an angel."

The old lady smiled grimly. "I guess if I was an angel I'd be living in the glorious company of heaven instid of here by myself."

Judy paused in her act of balancing a portion of egg upon her three-tined fork. "Do you mean to say that you live here all the year around all alone?"

"Yes'm. I've got this home and I haven't got much else. It gives me a living and I guess I hadn't ought to complain."

"Don't you get awfully lonely?"

"Well, yes, I do, especially in winter when I get snowed up. Neighbors ain't so near as they might be, but they are real kind if I ain't well, or want an errand done. But, law suz! I get so lonely sometimes that I am nearly sick for the sound of a human voice. I went to the expense of a telephone just so as to be able to speak to somebody once in a while. There ain't any of my own folks about here now, all dead, and I ain't so very well acquainted with them that have taken their places, but I declare that some evenings it gets so quiet that I go to the telephone and get a sight of comfort

in listening to anybody that happens to be talking on this line."

"How long have you been living here alone?" asked Miss Armitage.

"Since my brother died; that's about eight years ago. I let the farm part out on shares to a neighbor, and I keep my garden and a pasture lot for my cow. I don't know what I'd do without my cow. She's the only female I have to talk to, and she is as tame as a kitten and as gentle. My dog and cat are a sight of comfort, too, but somehow the cow is more like folks to me."

"She certainly gives delicious milk," said Judy pouring out a second glass. "I hope we aren't depriving you, Miss Blodgett."

"Dear suz, no. I have more'n I can use."

"I suppose you read a great deal in winter," remarked Kathleen.

"Well, no, not such a great deal. I take a weekly paper so as to know what's going on in the state, but time night comes I'm pretty well tired out, looking after things, and I go to bed early."

"I suppose your friends write to you even if you can't get to them." Judy was trying to establish some other communication with the outside world for the lonely woman.

"I don't know as I've got kith nor kin, and all the

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friends I have are hereabouts. I don't know as I've had what you might call a letter for two or three years. Circulars sometimes, and things like that. I never was much of a writer, and I guess if anybody did write to me they'd get discouraged waiting for an answer."

All this was told in a matter-of-fact way, not at all in complaint. This was life and why fret oneself when it was unalterable?

The meal was finally concluded and the guests rose to go. Miss Armitage left a dollar bill on the table, but Miss Blodgett hurried to her to return it. "I guess if you knew what it's meant to me to have folks come in for a meal you wouldn't want to pay for it," she said tremulously. "You're the first that's set down to that table as company since my brother died. I'm sure what I gave you was little enough and didn't cost me anything. If you've got the time to set and talk to me for a spell I'd feel myself paid over and over again."

"We'd love to clear away the dishes," said Kathleen.

Miss Blodgett shook her head. "No, m'. I want to feel as if I'd had company."

"Everything was so good," said Judy. "You don't know how we did enjoy it. I wish you would introduce us to your cow. I want to thank her for that delicious milk."

Nothing she could say would have opened a surer way to the old lady's heart. She took them out to the cow pasture. "That's Sukey." She pointed out the sleek-skinned red and white cow who lifted her head and gave a soft "Moo" when she saw her mistress, then she galloped up clumsily to rub her head against Miss Blodgett's shoulder and to gaze at the strangers with wondering eyes.

The mournful faced dog which had arisen from the door mat to follow them whined with pleasure under Kathleen's caresses, and the cat, roused from its slumbers, purred as Judy stroked its soft fur.

"I love cats," Judy told their hostess, "and this one is so friendly. What is his name?" she inquired as she gathered the purring beast into her arms.

"I call him Malt, and the dog Rover. He was my brother's, and he is getting pretty old now." She stooped to pat the dog which nuzzled her hand and looked up with humid eyes.

"Now we want to see those nice white hens and your garden," said Miss Armitage, "and then we will have a few minutes' talk before we go back to camp."

"Where did you say you come from to-day?" inquired Miss Blodgett.

"We came from Camp Kuequenáku, on the lake, two or three miles from here. We have been up to see the old Hill church and are on our way home."

suppose she was ever in an automobile or a motor boat in her life?"

"Very likely not, but it will be the best kind of an experience for her. She needs rubbing up. She is like an old silver plate all dim and tarnished. Imagine living within such narrow bounds."

"The poor thing shows her lack of imagination in the names she has bestowed upon her creatures," remarked Kathleen. "I don't imagine poor Rover ever roved, he has such a cast-down, dispirited expression, and why call a cat Maltz because it is Maltese, and a cow Sukey, a pet cow at that?"

"Poor old dear," Miss Armitage spoke commiseratingly, "I can well believe that any one of us might crawl along a very low plane of thought if we lived alone as she has done for eight years. Oneself isn't very inspiring, especially if it is a practical, commonplace self to begin with."

"But so kindly she is," Judy put in. "I believe she has imagination if it is only fostered; at all events she needs chirking up and we must try to do it."

"I believe you are right," rejoined Kathleen thoughtfully. "A dollar must mean a lot to her and yet she valued her entertainment of us beyond money."

"And that speaks volumes," added Miss Armitage.

Miss Blodgett became such an interesting topic that the return walk to camp did not seem so long as they

expected. At a turn in the road they could look back at the isolated little farmhouse which seemed so aloof from its neighbors.

"How solitary and unfriended it must look in winter," said Judy, "with the snow heaped up around and the paths untrod. I suppose the neighbors look to it that Miss Blodgett is not completely snowed in."

"She said they shoveled paths for her in the heaviest snows, and you know she can get to her barn without going out-of-doors as it and the house are under the same roof," rejoined Kathleen, "but it must be nearly half a mile to the nearest neighbor's."

"If this seems a remote, inaccessible sort of locality at this time of year how much more so it must seem when all the leaves are off the trees and the country looks desolate and bare," Miss Armitage spoke. "It seems almost incredible that a woman can exist here alone in any sort of comfort, and how true it is that one half the world doesn't know how the other half lives."

Their report of the day's expedition was listened to with much interest by the others as they gathered in the Wigwam that evening.

"We will go to call upon her, every one of us," declared Kitty Acker.

"Not in a body, I hope," Miss Keene returned smilingly.

"Oh, no, in sections. Of course we know enough

not to expect to be given any of those good eats the others had to-day, and we shall give them the rewards due to their discovery, but we can at least go and see the cow and the dog and the cat."

"I won't deny you that privilege," Miss Keene responded.

"But she is coming to see us first," Judy spoke up, "that is if Miss Keene will let the motor boat bring her from the wharf at the lower road."

Miss Keene acceded very willingly to this arrangement and the girls became more and more excited over the visit of the little old lady.

"Why couldn't we keep her over night and show off some of our Camp Fire stunts?" proposed Kitty.

"Oh, she would never consent to that," Judy spoke with conviction. "I don't suppose anything would induce her to leave that precious cow for a night, not to mention the dog and cat. She would be scared to death. You must remember that she hardly ever steps foot off that place, and I suppose it is ages since she slept out of her own house."

"She probably wouldn't sleep a wink here," Miss Armitage remarked, "but I will tell you what we might do: we might go to her place for one of our Council Fires and invite her to join us."

"Fine!" came an enthusiastic chorus. "Great idea! We can do that, can't we, Miss Keene?"



"It seems to me a perfectly feasible plan, but we shall have to learn Miss Blodgett's views upon the subject before we decide definitely. She might not like to have us invade her premises in such a wholesale manner. We'd better wait till she has made her visit here before we talk too much about it."

"Oh, dear, Miss Keene, you are so dreadfully reasonable," sighed Kitty. "I'd like to begin planning right away."

Miss Keene laughed. "If I didn't exercise some common sense I'd like to know where you girls would be. There is no objection to your planning, however, if it gives you any joy."

"Then let's plan," Kitty turned to Judy. "If there shouldn't happen to be a moon we shall have to carry our lanterns."

Judy fell in instantly with the project and the two, joined by several others, buzzed eagerly till the bugle sounded.

Like Kitty, Judy was not wont to let the grass grow under her feet once she had any scheme to carry out, therefore it was not many days before she had called up Miss Blodgett, had arranged for the automobile, secured a promise from both Kathleen and Miss Armistage, and had seen to it that the girls would all be on hand upon the appointed afternoon.

The committee to wait upon Miss Blodgett started

off gaily. "Suppose she balks at the last minute," Kathleen suggested the possibility. "Perhaps she will be scared solid to go in an automobile."

"Don't suggest it," Judy sighed. "I have been having qualms myself, and have been wondering if it wouldn't have been better to get a staid horse and a carriage with a safe driver. Well, it is too late now; we can only hope that she will be a true sport and rise to the occasion."

They found the old lady standing on her porch fingering her door-key nervously. The three girls sprang out of the car and went toward her with a gay greeting. "All ready, Miss Blodgett? Isn't this a jewel of a day? We're going to have a fine ride, aren't we?"

"Are we—do you expect me—I never was in one of those things in all my life," she said tremulously. "They always seem like some sort of wild beast tearing along the road and screeching so frightfully."

"This is a very tame one," responded Judy persuasively. "You will be as safe as in your own bed. It is a good road all the way and we have a perfectly reliable chauffeur."

Miss Blodgett looked at her as if she didn't know what sort of thing a chauffeur might be, as indeed she did not till Miss Armitage, guessing her ignorance, said quietly, "We have had this same driver very

often and we know he is very careful. We will guarantee to deliver you at six o'clock to Sukey and Rover, in just as good condition as you are now."

It still required more persuasion before Miss Blodgett could bring herself to enter the automobile, but once started her fears were soon allayed, though all the way she clutched nervously at Judy and Miss Armitage sitting one on either side of her. The motor boat was scarcely a less object of terror, though it was quite evident that she enjoyed the water trip once she became used to the boat. As it neared the camp the group of eager girls on shore set up a welcoming call.

"That's for you," Judy explained. "You are our guest of honor and every girl you see is waiting to be your friend."

"Oh, my dear," quavered the old lady too overcome to say more.

When they crowded around anxious to help her ashore, to give her a comfortable seat, to introduce her to each and every one present from Miss Keene down to the youngest among them, she became too bewildered to say a word. Miss Keene watching the quivering lips turned to Miss Armitage to say in an undertone, "We are too much for her. Take off the girls and tell them to get into their bathing suits so we can let Miss Blodgett see what they can do in the water."

Left with only the councilors Miss Blodgett's agitation subsided somewhat. She turned to Miss Keene apologetically. "I hope you will excuse me, but it is all so strange. I don't know what brother David would say to see me this day. I feel as if I was somebody else than Mercy Blodgett. Little did I expect ever to ride in one of those aut'mobiles that I see every day footing it down the road and screeching like old Sancho, but, do you know," she leaned nearer to Miss Keene confidentially, "I liked it, and I liked the boat ride, too, when I got used to the queer smell. Land a massy, what are those girls going to do?" She grabbed Miss Keene's arm convulsively.

"They are going to show you how well they can swim and dive. You mustn't be alarmed at anything you see for they will be perfectly safe. The boats are right there, you see, and their teacher is an expert in water sports."

The girls, who were arriving singly and in laughing, chattering groups, went plunging into the water, some from the spring-board, some from the wharf, but at each plunge Miss Blodgett drew a gasping breath, sometimes starting from her seat under the shade of a branching oak. "I don't see how they dare do it," she murmured. But when Judy gave an exhibition of a supposed rescue of Kitty Acker the old lady was really alarmed. "Lawful suz!" she cried. "That

girl will drown. She won't be able to get her back to land. Somebody go out to 'em quick."

Miss Keene laid a restraining hand upon the agitated little person's arm. "That is all pretence," she said. "It is to show you how well able Judy is to save one of her comrades if she should be exhausted. It is all make believe with the girl she is pretending to save."

Miss Blodgett sat down again murmuring, "I never expected to live to see anything like that."

The water sports consumed so much time that there was no chance to do more than show the guest around the camp. Miss Keene demurred at allowing her to climb the hill to the Wigwam, but she spurned the implication of her disability. "I rather guess a woman that does all her own work, tends her garden and does all her outdoor chores is able to walk up that hill, and another one on top of it," she added.

She was quite ready to go when the time came, however. The thought of Sukey lowing at the bars, of Malty meowing for his saucer of milk and Rover whining to be let in, was too much for her. Before she stepped into the boat she turned and made a little stiff bow to the encircling company. "I want to thank you all," she said. "I've had a beautiful time, and I'm never going to forget it."

With one accord the girls started up the "Song to our Guest," as the boat headed down the lake. "I feel

as if I was a crowned head," said Miss Blodgett tremulously as she waved her work-worn hand to the little company on shore. "I never expected there was anything like this coming to me so near home. Somewhere in my Bible it says something about entertaining angels unawares and I guess I've done it."

"And we said she had no imagination," whispered Kathleen to Miss Armitage.

"Did you say anything to her about the Council Fire?" was Kitty's anxious question when Judy returned.

"My dear," Judy answered, "we shall have to let to-day's doings soak in. The poor old dear is all befuddled as it is. Wait till she gets a little more used to us before we fire another set of ideas at her."

## CHAPTER V

### ADOPTING AN OLD BABY

**T**AKING Miss Keene's advice the girls made no calls upon Miss Blodgett for a few days that they might give her time to recover from the excitement of her visit to camp and to digest her experiences. To all of Kitty Acker's importunities "When *are* you going to find out about Miss Blodgett and the Council Fire?" Judy made the oracular reply: "Brer Rabbit lay low."

However there came an afternoon when Miss Keene, Kathleen and Judy slipped off to pay a visit to the lonely little farm. The rest had gone off for a canoeing trip down the lake and would not know of the errand till evening.

"I thought we'd best not say anything about it, for they would all want to go," Miss Keene explained, "and I think it would not do to overpower the old lady."

They found Miss Blodgett down on her knees weeding her garden, Maltie soberly watching her, and Rover, with head on paws, keeping an eye out for such masculine intruder as might come in the gate. Petticoats he did not object to, but an unfamiliar male roused all his antagonism.

Miss Blodgett rose stiffly as her visitors approached. "You'll excuse me if I don't shake hands," she said. "I'm all weeds and dirt. I declare I never saw anything grow like the weeds; it's all I can do to keep 'em down, and I can't do half I'd ought. Seems though two grow for every one I pull. How are you all?"

"We are all fine," Judy responded heartily, "and how are you after your jaunt? None the worse, I hope."

"Dear me, suz, no. I feel ten years younger. I told Sukey all about it, and it keeps me thinking all the time I'm at work. When I close my eyes at night I see those girls jumping off that board just as plain. Here, child, what are you doing?" For Kathleen was down on her knees pulling away at the weeds.

"Please let me," Kathleen begged. "I'd love to. I had a little garden at home and I know weeds from plants. You go and talk to Judy and Miss Keene and let me work here for a while."

Miss Blodgett raised her knotty, earth-stained hands and let them fall again. "Did you ever?" she exclaimed looking helplessly at Miss Keene.

"Let her do it," Miss Keene advised. "It will not hurt her and she would like to, I know." So they left Kathleen continuing her labors while they went up to the house, and into the plain little sitting-room where braided mats adorned the floor and an ancient clock

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ticked solemnly. There were no curtains to the windows, but the green shades, drawn down, kept out the glare of the midsummer sun.

"I don't know as you like buttermilk," said Miss Blodgett as she drew forward an old horsehair-covered rocking-chair to offer Miss Keene. "I churned this morning and I'd be pleased to give you some if you'd care for it. I guess maybe you're pretty warm after your walk, and I got the pail down the well to keep cool. I was hoping you'd be coming along to-day."

"A glass of buttermilk certainly would be refreshing," Miss Keene assured her, and while the little old lady bustled off to get it the visitors looked round the room.

"It certainly isn't pretty," remarked Judy after a silence, "and it isn't even cheerful, but what can you expect of the poor old dear with everything to do herself and no means of replacing anything that is worn out? I think she should be given the greatest credit for keeping it all as clean as she does."

"This horsehair certainly is depressing," returned Miss Keene, "and the paint is worn and dingy. With fresh paint and some new curtains it would look quite cheerful, especially in winter with a few plants in the windows."

"Dear me, it offers all sorts of possibilities, doesn't

it? I wonder——” She stopped short, for here Miss Blodgett entered with the buttermilk.

“Help yourselves, ladies,” she said. “I will take some out to Miss Gilman if you will excuse me for a moment.”

“Oh, no, let me do it,” cried Judy springing up. “You stay here and talk to Miss Keene and let me go. I want to see how Kathleen is getting on, anyway.”

With this excuse she hurried out to find Kathleen wrestling with pursley and burdock, and quite heated from her exertions. “Good!” cried she as she took the glass. “I was so thirsty, and was just thinking I would resort to ‘the old oaken bucket that hangs in the well.’ Oh, Judy, I have been thinking such things while I have been weeding.”

“Oh, dear me, so have I. You tell me yours and I will tell you mine. If I knew which were beans and which were weeds I’d help you, but I am afraid I’d do more damage than good. I won’t go back just yet. We’ll let Miss Keene start the entering wedge for the Council Fire. Go on and tell me.”

“I was wondering if we girls couldn’t come up once in a while on a weeding party. We could get a lot done in an afternoon and it would be a real lift to the poor old thing.”

“Great head! I think that would be fine. We could get honors on it, too. There is something about identi-

fyng weeds in the Manual. I can't tell one unless it has burs on it, but I would like to learn."

"Here's a specimen," said Kathleen tossing over a long piece of yellow dock which she had just managed to drag up by its roots. "You can take it back to camp and study it. Now go on with your thinks."

"I was wondering if we girls couldn't furbish up that little old sitting-room a bit. Some paint, fresh curtains and a few odds and ends would make it look like another place."

"Perhaps Miss Blodgett doesn't want it to look like another place," suggested Kathleen, "and perhaps she is proud and would resent it."

"Quite true, most sapient maiden, I hadn't thought of either of those contingencies. We'll have to get more intimate with her and find out her 'druthers' before we do anything rash. Don't do any more now, Kath; you'll get all overheated and tired out. That is quite a pile you have gathered. I don't think it is work for the afternoon but for the cool of the morning or evening."

"That is so; we'll have to manage to do it either early or late. Just wait, Judy, till I get these out of the way and I will go back with you." She tossed the armful of weeds upon another heap at the end of the garden and then the two returned together.

They found Miss Keene deep in conversation with

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Miss Blodgett. "I have just been asking our friend if she would not like to see one of our Council Fires," said Miss Keene with a meaning look at the girls.

"And would she?" queried Judy sitting down by Miss Blodgett's side on the wooden settee.

"Oh, my dear," answered the old lady, "I would much like to see it, but Miss Keene tells me it takes place at sundown, and I should not like to be away so late from home, besides if I started early enough to get to your camp Sukey would miss her milking time and that would never do. I had such a beautiful time the other day that I oughtn't to expect more. I am sure I am much obliged to you for inviting me, and I'd admire to go, but I guess I'll have to be satisfied with what I have seen."

"But we don't always have our Camp Fire on the camp grounds," Judy explained with a glance at Miss Keene.

"Oh, don't you? Where do you have them?"

"Why, in any nice spot where we can build our fire. If it is at a distance we have our picnic supper first and the ceremonials afterward, then we do different things, songs or dances or games. We have a lovely talk, too, from Miss Keene, and there is ever so much to the Council Fire. I'll tell you what we can do, if you cannot get to one of the meets some of us can come and explain it all and read you the count."

Miss Blodgett looked a little bewildered though very eager. "I'm sure it must be beautiful," she sighed. "I used to go to picnics sometimes when I was a girl, but it has been many a long year since I attended one."

Miss Keene felt that it was time to speak. "How would you like to have us come right here? I am sure we could find a suitable spot on your place. If you would allow us the use of that field over yonder it would be near enough for you to come."

Miss Blodgett leaned forward eagerly. "My ten acre lot over there by the piece of woods?"

"That would be a lovely place," Kathleen broke in.

"Do you really mean it?"

"We most certainly do, if you would not mind," Miss Keene spoke. "We are always very careful about our fires and can assure you we would do no damage."

"We would come early and bring our supper," Judy came into the conversation, "and you could watch us cook things."

"And I could bring some chicken and hard-boiled eggs and cookies in a basket?" Miss Blodgett spoke with the eagerness of a child.

"Of course, but we want you to be our honored guest."

"Then couldn't I bring the things to eat? I'd like to so much, and you could have all the milk you wanted."

"Certainly you could bring anything you pleased," Miss Keene assured her, seeing the dear woman wanted to feel herself a part of the company.

"And will you really come?"

"If you will be so good as to allow us." Miss Keene smiled down at the weather-beaten old face, so pathetically eager.

"Don't say that! Don't say that! It is you that's good. Seems though I should shed tears. I been so lonely sometimes I felt like crying, but I never felt like crying for joy since this many a year. Me, going to a picnic in my own ten acre lot, and going to see all you young folks and your pretty ways! I guess from this out I'm not going to have many lonely hours, thinking about all this summer."

"Then it's all settled that we are to come," said Judy wanting to get the matter down to a fixed basis.

"Indeed you are. All I ask is that you'll give me time to make my cookies and cook my chicken."

"You shall have ample time," Miss Keene assured her. "Indeed I think we could fix upon a date right away." She consulted the two girls and finally a day of the following week was agreed upon and they took their leave, but whether their own satisfaction or the old lady's delight was greater it would be hard to say.

"Where have you two been?" interrogated Kitty

Acker as she caught sight of the two girls on their way to Minnewawa.

"Arranging for our next Council Fire," replied Judy with a twinkle in her eye.

Kitty caught her arm. "Tell me at once. Have you been to see Miss Blodgett? What did she say? Was she willing? Are we to go to her place?"

"Which question shall I answer first?" returned Judy teasingly.

"You horrid thing! Go on and tell me."

Judy began checking off the answers on her fingers. "First: we have been to see Miss Blodgett. Second: she said many things; it would take too long to tell you them all. Third: she was more than willing. Fourth: we are to have our Council Fire on her ten acre lot next week. Are you satisfied, or do you want to fire a few more questions at me?"

"If you will sit down like an amiable Christian and tell me all about your visit I will not ask another question."

"Come along in to Minnewawa then, and I will give you an account while Kath does her work at the Wigwam."

However, it is safe to say that Kitty did not refrain from asking questions nor from expressing her satisfaction, and at the end of the recital started off to spread the news. At Pine Cradle it was received with

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enthusiasm, and the same could be said of Waubeek, but at Mishanneke, where Annabel Ladd lodged, there was not much interest shown.

"News! News!" cried Kitty as she came upon Annabel listlessly watching two squirrels at play. "Guess where we are going to have our next Council Fire."

"I'm sure I don't know and I don't care much," returned Annabel discontentedly. "I don't see why one place isn't as good as another."

"Oh, but this is something unusual. We are going to Miss Blodgett's ten acre lot and she is to be our guest."

"I can't for the life of me see why you want to make such a fuss over that old woman," responded Annabel with a scornful shrug. "Wherein is she so remarkable?"

"I don't consider myself remarkable either," retorted Kitty, "but when I am old, and maybe living, as she does, alone, I hope I may have the same sweet spirit, and I hope there may be a few young people in the world who will have the grace to be kind to me."

Annabel lifted her eyebrows contemptuously. "As if you could ever compare your position to hers. Why, she is an uneducated, plain old country woman who does her own work, even man's work, and hasn't a thought above her very ordinary animals."

"I don't see why in the world you ever wanted to



join the Camp Fire Girls if you didn't believe in glorifying work," replied Kitty.

"I joined it because I heard what a good time you girls had, and because my parents wanted me to go to some camp while they were away this summer. My mother knew Miss Keene, and I thought when I heard of your suppers and your trips and your water sports and games that I might have a good time. That is why I came, if you must know."

Kitty looked at her silently for a moment, then she said pityingly: "You poor thing," after which she turned away without another word leaving Annabel quite uncertain as to the exact meaning of her remark.

It would have taken more than Annabel, however, to dampen the joy of the company of girls who started forth the next week to Miss Blodgett's ten acre lot. Annabel, to be sure, trailed along with them with a bored expression upon her face, but no one took the least notice of it, and it is doubtful if any one, except Miss Keene, observed that she stood aloof when they surrounded the little old lady and nearly overpowered her by the vehemence of their greetings. Her basket was all ready, and indeed had been so for hours. She had sacrificed not only one but two of her roosters and had made a noble batch of cookies, while the milking of the night before, as well as of the morning, had been set aside to be used upon this momentous occasion.

Carrying the loaded baskets between them, swinging their lanterns and chorusing, " Wohelo, Wohelo, Wohelo for aye!" the girls, conveying little Miss Blodgett in their midst, went joyously down the slope toward the fringe of forest bordering the field where they meant to build their fire. Supper, coming first, was such a merry meal that even the exclusive Annabel relaxed some of her hauteur and laughed with the rest. An excellent supper it was, too, lettuce and cheese sandwiches, cold chicken, potato chips, hard-boiled eggs, topped off with Miss Blodgett's generous supply of cookies and helped along by draughts of sweet, rich milk. Then, in their picturesque ceremonial dresses, the girls came silently forth from the shadowy woods to the music of Mary Wade's violin, to take their places in the circle. Judy and Molly, using the sticks, made ready to light the fire, and the usual ceremonies went on.

Miss Blodgett, her hands tightly clasped together, watched every movement. There were no new members to be admitted and not many honors to award, and so the games and folk dances began in good time. In spite of the old lady's protests, the girls insisted upon dragging her into a game of Blind Man's Buff, in which she proved herself as agile as any. The amusing Ox dance and the pretty Squaw dance evoked memories of tales which Gran'ther Blodgett had told his

grandchildren when they were all gathered around the big fireplace and the winter winds were howling outside.

"We used to get awful scared sometimes and afraid to go to bed," Miss Blodgett said. "Lands sakes! if anybody'd told me I'd ever be living alone in the old house, I guess I'd have been more 'skeery' than I was. But there, no hobgoblins been after me yet; and as for wolves and witches like what grandma told about, there's never one pestered me yet, and ain't likely to."

While she was talking Judy was whispering to Kathleen, and then the two carried on a low voiced conversation with Miss Keene, who frequently nodded agreement with the eager propositions they were evidently making.

"And haven't you any nieces or nephews?" they heard Kitty ask Miss Blodgett.

"Not kith nor kin nearer than distant cousins who live somewhere in York State," was the reply. "My brother and I were the last of our direct line."

"Then," Miss Keene spoke up, "maybe you would let us adopt you, or you could adopt us, whichever way you like to put it."

"Oh, Miss Blodgett, do let us," came a chorus. "We'd love to give you an Indian name and have you one of us."

"Well, now, isn't that real sweet of you," said Miss

Blodgett, looking around at the animated faces. "I'd admire to belong to you, but I don't want any Injun name. I always desired to be called Aunt Mercy by somebody. I had hopes once of having nephews and nieces of my own, but that hope died some years ago, so if you young ladies will call me Aunt Mercy I'd be pleased."

"We'd love to do that," came the eager chorus again.

"And you'll have twenty nieces," spoke up Kitty.

Aunt Mercy wiped her eyes. "I declare," she quavered, "I don't know how to thank the Lord for his goodness. Here as I am travelling toward the end of my pilgrimage I reach these pleasant places, and my desires are fulfilled. I presume nobody ever had a more direct answer to prayer."

"But, Aunt Mercy," Kathleen spoke up, "won't you let us have an Indian name for you just among ourselves? We will promise to use it only when you come to the Council Fires. I have thought of such a pretty one; I saw it the other day, and it seems so appropriate. It is Weenonah, and it means Loaf Giver. You gave us of your loaves that first day, you know."

"That is kind of pretty," admitted Aunt Mercy. "Well, if you call me Aunt Mercy to my face I don't know as I shall mind what you call me behind my back."

"You may be sure that we shall call you only something very nice, wherever we may be," said Judy affectionately.

"Dear, dear," responded the old lady, "I can see how I shall get terrible sot up if you keep on like that, Miss Falkner."

"Not Miss Falkner," Judy reminded her. "Aunts always call their nieces by their first names."

"But won't that seem sort of—sort of familiar?" said Aunt Mercy, her New England reticence rather shocked by such a suggestion of sudden intimacy.

"Not a bit of it," replied Judy staunchly. "We don't want to be ceremonious with one another nor with our Aunt Mercy."

Miss Blodgett gave in without further ado, then came the Good Night song, the happy guest keeping time with head and hand as she stood by Miss Keene's side to watch the girls file away from the fire. After the last red ember had been extinguished the company started up the hill to leave Miss Blodgett standing in her doorway to watch the last bobbing lantern as it twinkled around a bend in the road.

"Wasn't it lovely?" said Kitty to Annabel by whom she happened to be walking.

"Oh, good enough, but it makes me tired to see the way you all act about that old woman. Such a per-

fectly silly idea to talk of adopting her. Who ever heard of such nonsense."

"I think it is simply great," replied Kitty enthusiastically. "I have known of Camp Fires adopting a baby, and I don't see why we can't adopt an old baby if we want to."

"Well, if you must do it, I don't see why you couldn't have picked out some one worth while, some celebrated person, a real heroine, or somebody that stands high."

"Babies never stand very high," returned Kitty in order to turn the subject, seeing that Annabel was not possessed of a mind to accept the right point of view.

Then Betty Morrison and Molly Ludlow came up, and Kitty joined them allowing Annabel to fall behind. "She is such a wet blanket," Kitty confided to her friends. "It is like a drone in a hive, and we can't cover her with wax and get rid of her in that way."

"She is a bore," admitted Molly, "but I suppose we should try to influence her, unresponsive as she is."

"If she would only allow herself to be boosted up," Betty spoke, "it would be more encouraging, but it is so tiresome to have to argue and argue and then get no nearer than when you started."

"I wonder if Miss Keene notices what a kill-joy she is," said Molly.

"Miss Keene sees more than you think," Kitty assured her, "but I don't believe she does know how hateful Annabel is about Miss Blodgett."

"Not Miss Blodgett; you forget she is our Aunt Mercy," said Betty. "Let's talk about her instead of Annabel; she is such an old dear. Wasn't it lovely to see her playing Blind Man's Buff? She did seem to enjoy it so. When she picked up her skirts and scooted out of the way I laughed so that I hadn't wit enough not to be caught myself."

"She certainly is a spry old body," agreed Kitty. "I'll tell you girls what I think it would be nice to do when we have left here; we can take turns in writing to her, so she will feel that we aren't just summer-day friends. There are twenty of us ——"

"Nineteen, you mean, for you will have to count out Annabel," put in Molly.

"That's so, but then we haven't counted the councilors, and I am sure some of them will agree, Miss Armitage for one, so that wouldn't mean much more than one letter apiece, if we sent one a week for the time between our leaving camp and our coming back next year. I am sure I'd be willing to write two letters, wouldn't you?"

"Of course," responded the other two heartily.

"And at Christmas we could send her a round robin," Betty came in with the suggestion.

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"And each of us could send her a pretty card," Molly added.

"And those of us who feel like it might send her a little present," Kitty built up the plan.

"I know who'll be the first to want to do that," said Betty, "and that is Judy Falkner; she is always so generous, to be sure she has the means to be, but, even so, it isn't every one who would think of the things she does."

"Speaking of Judy takes us back to Annabel," said Molly. "She had the cheek to tell us girls the other morning that she would never have thought of joining our Camp Fire if she hadn't known that Judy belonged to it. Did you ever?"

"I wonder if she thinks for a moment that we feel honored by her presence among us," remarked Kitty. "But there, girls, I don't suppose it is very nice to talk about her behind her back even though she does give us reason to. Let's catch up with Judy and Kathleen: they are just ahead."



## CHAPTER VI

### CROSS AND CROSS PURPOSES

KITTY was quite right in believing that Miss Keene observed more than some of her girls gave her credit, for Annabel's attitude was one which she had been seriously studying. While she felt that the girl was a misfit and out of harmony with her happy group, she was not ready to give up a hope that something could be done to alter Annabel's outlook, and with this idea in mind she consulted Miss Penniman and the other councilors.

Each was ready with some suggestion but to Miss Armitage must be given the credit of solving the problem. "Of course we can all see that she has not a particle of the Camp Fire spirit and that she wanted to join our group for her own self-interests, but once or twice I have seen a very faint spark that might be kindled into a real fire of right thinking," she began.

"That is just my thought," Miss Keene agreed. "To be sure she has false standards, and in some cases I am afraid she influences the girls in a very undesirable way, but must we give her up while that faint spark is there?"

"I should say decidedly not," broke in Miss Penni-

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man. "You say you have had some grave talks with her?"

"Yes, but evidently she thinks I cannot be in sympathy with her on account of my weight of years," Miss Keene smiled, "that the æons which have passed since I was a girl place me quite outside any understanding of the situation. She complains that the girls give her the cold shoulder and she attributes it to jealousy, when the poor child is so jealous of any preference shown to another that it is pitiful. She is envious of another's superior attainments but she doesn't want to exert herself to such efforts as would place her on a similar plane. She works for honors only because the beads make ornaments which she can show off. Her point of view is all awry, and it seems difficult to get the key which will open the door to her mind."

"I have been wondering," Miss Armitage said, "if Judy Falkner is not the key to the situation. Of course it would mean great sacrifice on Judy's part as well as on Kathleen's, but I believe those two girls are large minded enough to throw themselves into the breach for the good of the common cause."

"I don't believe Annabel would yield to Kathleen's influence," observed Miss Penniman, "simply because she does not occupy the position which Annabel admires. Judy does of course."

"I wasn't thinking so much of Kathleen's influence

as of her sacrifice. She and Judy are such a devoted pair that for them to be separated would mean almost a sorrow, and what I was going to propose would mean separation, for a time at least."

"What do you propose?" asked Miss Keene.

"That you try to persuade Judy to change her quarters and go in with Annabel at Mishanneke, while Evelyn goes up to Minnewawa to take Judy's place. If you could get Judy to see that by using her influence with Annabel she will be helping the whole group and be mounting up to a path which leads to the rank of Torch Bearer, I think it might be a good thing all around."

"It would be pretty hard on Judy," observed Miss Keene thoughtfully, "but at the same time it would develop a spirit of self-denial which would be an excellent thing for her character. I have sometimes thought that Judy, dear as she is, would be better if she did not have her own way quite so much. I believe you have found the key, Miss Armitage."

Therefore that same evening Miss Keene had a long talk with Judy who at first spurned the proposal that she leave her dear Minnewawa. "Why, Miss Keene," she said, "it would spoil our whole summer. You don't know how Kathleen and I have looked forward to it, and what it means to us both."

"I think I do know," replied Miss Keene, "and I do

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not require it of you. I am simply laying the case before you, and I think the whole matter depends upon how much you desire to pass on your light undimmed to others."

"Oh, please don't put it that way," responded Judy tearfully.

"Do you want to become a Torch Bearer, Judy, to bear the Torch of Life and Light and be a guide to others, or are you satisfied to remain a Fire Maker?"

"Oh, Miss Keene, you are making it dreadfully hard for me."

"It is hard, I acknowledge, Judy dear, but if I did not think you equal to rising to the opportunity I would not suggest it. Let your memory travel back to the days before you met Sadie Wallace and first heard about the Camp Fire Girls. Are you the same Judy you were then, and don't you think it is rather a wonderful thing that there comes a chance for you to do for another what was done for you? It is no small thing, dear child, to help shape a life, and if through you Annabel's face is turned toward truth and light, isn't that worth more than the pleasure of one summer?"

"I suppose it is," answered Judy meekly, "but I can't be happy in doing it, and to be happy is one of the parts of the Camp Fire Law."

"I think you will be happy, perhaps not just at first,

but the compensation will come as you put your heart into what you are doing."

"But why should I sacrifice Kathleen to Annabel? Poor Kathleen will be heart-broken. Surely she has made sacrifices enough in her life not to have this one demanded of her."

"Your point of view is quite natural. Suppose we don't decide at once. You think it over for a day or two and when you make up your mind you can tell me. Remember it is not a demand. I leave it entirely to your own judgment."

Judy went away with a very woe-begone expression. She could not remember that she had ever had such a very unpleasant situation forced upon her. She knew that Miss Keene had the clearer vision, but her desires rebelled against the thing which her inmost conscience told her she should do.

She came upon Kathleen busily working upon a design, and sat down dejectedly upon the side of her cot, dropping her head in her hands.

Kathleen glanced up at her. "What's the matter, Judy?" she inquired.

Judy heaved a long sigh. "I've been talking to Miss Keene," she said after a pause, "and she has made me perfectly miserable."

"Why, Judy!" Kathleen put down her pencil, and looked at her friend in astonishment.

Judy nodded gravely. "She has. What do you suppose she proposed that I should do?"

"I can't imagine."

"That I leave Minnewawa and go room with Annabel."

"I don't believe it. You're joking," cried Kathleen.

"It is the solemn truth."

"But why? Why?"

"In order that your Judy's wonderful influence may set Miss Annabel's feet in the right way."

"Oh, bother! she's hopeless; nothing would set her feet in the right way. It is preposterous. Of course you will not do it."

"Oh, I don't know. I don't know."

"I will bet anything that the horrid little minx has been whining to Miss Keene and complaining of poor Evelyn who is worth a dozen of her. It is as plain as the nose on your face that all she wants is to boast of having had you for a roommate, when she gets back home. We all know what she said to Molly and the others, and that she is just crazy to be intimate with you."

"No, I don't believe it is that," responded Judy thoughtfully. "I don't think she has been to Miss Keene at all, but I think Miss Keene finds her a problem. She doesn't want to send her away and feels that every spark of virtue in her should be fanned into

flame. She realizes that because Annabel foolishly wants to cater to me, for the most ignoble reasons, that I should be the one to show her what is really worth while, if I can."

"But of course you refused to spoil your whole summer on account of a girl like that."

"I did at first, but Miss Keene wouldn't accept the decision as final and insisted that I should think it over."

"But—but Judy, where would I be? Would you leave me? How could we give up all our dear times together, our talks and walks, for that is what it would amount to."

"Don't I realize all that? You don't know what an awful responsibility it is to have to decide an important thing like this."

"I should think I did know, for am I not wrestling over a tremendous question myself?"

"Oh, Kath, and you never told me. What in the world is it?"

Kathleen was silent for a moment, half regretting her impetuosity in mentioning the matter, but presently she got up and hunted for her aunt's letter which she tossed into Judy's lap. "Read that," she said.

Judy gave close attention to the pages and after she came to the end she turned back to look at the date. "And you have had this all these days and didn't tell

me," she exclaimed. "Of course you will not think of going."

"Why not?"

"Think what it would mean, the giving up of your studies, your career, in the first place, and leaving all your friends and interests, and last, but by no means least, it would be separating yourself from your sister Judy. Of course I have counted on your spending next winter with me just as you did last."

"Oh, but Judy, I couldn't do that again, and if you are considering the possibility of leaving me for Annabel, I don't see but that it is quite as reasonable that I should leave you."

"Oh, but that is quite a different matter."

"I admit it is, for in the one place you would be making a chum of a girl that neither of us likes and in the other I should be going to my own aunt."

"You mistake me entirely." Judy was beginning to get excited. "In my case it would be only for a few weeks at most and in the other it would be for a lifetime."

"Not at all. You are liable to come to Florida every year," Kathleen spoke stiffly.

"Oh, very well, if you feel that way about it," said Judy lifting her chin, "the sooner I go over to Annabel the better."

Kathleen made no reply, and Judy, after waiting in



silence for a moment, took herself off in the direction of Mishanoke. Kathleen watched her trim athletic figure disappear behind the trees, and then turned back to her work with sinking heart. All the joy had gone out of it. She had quarrelled with Judy, her dear Judy. How had it happened that they had arrived at such cross purposes? At this moment she could see only her own side of the question. Judy appeared perfectly willing to accept Annabel as a roommate. She was glad she had not said anything before this of her own secret, for Judy might have overpersuaded her to make the promise of again spending the winter under the Falkners' roof, and then how embarrassing the situation. Well, her summer was spoiled; at its close she would write to her aunt and accept her offer. She took up her penell again and tried to work upon the design she was making for her new ceremonial dress, but a lump arose in her throat as she thought of Judy's interest in it, of their close companionship, and all that it had meant to them both. Kathleen drew a long sigh. "That is all over, I suppose," she murmured to herself, and then no longer able to work for the tears which clouded her eyes, she put up her paper and went out in the dim forest beyond her lodge.

When she returned she found that Judy's belongings were all packed up ready for removal, and, during the time Kathleen was busy with her share of duties at the

Wigwam, Judy saw to it that her own effects were established in Mishanneke, and that Evelyn's occupied their former place.

Two very unhappy girls were those two whose pillows were wet with tears that night, and it is safe to say that for the moment Annabel had no reason to congratulate herself on the exchange of roommates. Judy's unbridled scorn towered above Annabel's superciliousness, and Annabel crept into bed in a very humble frame of mind. Her budding hope, that Judy had voluntarily selected her because of her self-evident superiority above her fellows, received a shock, and she went to sleep wondering what could be the reason for Judy's leaving Minnewawa.

As for Evelyn she took things as they came. She was relieved at not being compelled to share a room with Annabel, but set it down to sheer good luck that Miss Keene had so ordained it. In order that the motive for the change might not appear too apparent, Miss Keene had arranged other transfers, to the satisfaction, in most cases, of the girls concerned.

Within the next few days the watchful Guardian noticed the extreme coolness which appeared to exist between Judy and Kathleen, and she realized that something was radically wrong. While Kathleen seemed to be on perfectly good terms with the amiable Evelyn, Judy was far from showing herself at her best with

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Annabel. Miss Keene, observing them, shook her head and said to herself, "It isn't working." Later on she purposely came upon Kathleen alone in her shack.

"Minnewawa always looks so bright and cheerful," she remarked. "Those bunch berries are so pretty in the baskets and your totem pole is a great success, but somehow, Thurénsera, your own cups of sunshine are lacking. If you retain that serious countenance we shall have to call you Fall of Night instead of Dawn of Day."

"I have had several things to trouble me," responded Kathleen soberly.

"Oh, have you? I am sorry. Is it anything that I could help with? You know, dear, you have told me how much you depended upon Miss Bolton for advice, and I want you to feel that I am not less ready."

Kathleen was silent before she said, "It has to do with my future, Miss Keene. My aunt in Florida wants me to live with her."

"That is a serious matter. Must it be decided at once?"

"Not till the end of the summer, but meantime I have to think about it and make up my mind."

"Which isn't an easy thing to do, of course. However, my dear, I wouldn't brood over it; just be happy and let it go for the present. You and I will talk over

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the pros and cons in due time, and perhaps together we may come to a wise decision."

"I know that is good advice, Miss Keene," said Kathleen dubiously, "but I don't believe I can help dwelling upon the subject when it means so much to me."

"What does Judy say about it?" asked Miss Keene.

Kathleen compressed her lips and then replied: "We do not have the same point of view at all, but if she gives me up for a girl like Annabel Ladd I don't see how she should think me wrong in leaving her to go to my own aunt."

"You know why she has gone in with Annabel?"

"I do in a measure, but I suppose the chief reason is because Annabel wanted her and she preferred to go."

"You are not taking the right view of it at all," Miss Keene assured her. "She was most unwilling to go, and more unwilling to leave you. She went because I felt that she could be of use and that she would find a wonderful opportunity to follow the Law of the Fire, to forget her own self in helping another too. You are both striving toward the goal of the Torch Bearer, and you have not forgotten the Fire Maker's Desire, have you, Kathleen?"

"Oh, I hope not."

"Then won't you help Judy in her difficult task?"

"I don't see how I can help her, for Annabel would simply scoff at anything I might say. She is holding

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her head very high because she feels that she has taken Judy away from me." Kathleen spoke with bitterness.

"Oh, dear! I understand it now. I felt that something was wrong, but I could not quite fathom it. Suppose you tell me all about it, Thurenserra. Make a clean breast of it and maybe we can unravel the snarl."

Kathleen, who had missed her friend and confidant sorely, was ready to pour out her troubles into a sympathetic ear and gave Miss Keene an account of the quarrel, ending up with, "You see just how it was, Miss Keene. Now, don't you think I have reason to feel aggrieved, and was I wrong?"

"You were both right and both wrong. Each was thinking of how she might be affected instead of setting aside her own desires and thinking of the other's good. Each was a little jealous and a little hurt. Judy felt that you had withheld your confidence from her and you felt that she was too ready to censure you for hesitation in a matter which vitally concerned you, and so as neither could see beyond her own interest you fell into a difference."

"Yes, I suppose that was the way," Kathleen answered meekly. "Of course I love Judy with all my heart and always shall. I know she always expects to have her own way and that it is hard for her to give

up. She had counted on my spending next winter with her and that was one thing that upset her, then she thought I was very indifferent about the possible prospect of leaving her and that made her want to appear unconcerned about leaving me. I suppose if each had shown what was really in her heart we should have had more sympathy for one another."

"Exactly. Unfortunately a lack of frankness is at the bottom of half the quarrels. Are you quite positive that you should not spend another winter with Judy?"

"I shall not have a chance to now, even if I wanted to. All that is over."

Miss Keene smiled a little wise smile. She realized that this was a veritable tragedy to Kathleen's mind and an enduring one, but she knew from experience that it was liable to be of very short duration. She had dealt too much with girls not to set a proper valuation upon their fallings out. "You poor little child," she said, taking Kathleen's nervous fingers in hers. "You are really suffering. I am afraid you are going through with an acute attack of self-pity."

Kathleen started. "Oh, Miss Keene, don't say that. I hoped I was cured."

"It is a very stubborn complaint, and even when one is recovered from a chronic case the symptoms are liable to return from time to time."

"What do you think I should take for it? Will you prescribe for me?"

"Suppose I suggest a bitter dose, will you take it?"

"I will try to."

"Good child. I will try not to make it too difficult. Will you go down to Mishanneke and tell Judy I would like to see her here?"

"I can do that." Kathleen braced herself to the effort.

"Then come back yourself. Will you?"

"I will, Miss Keene."

Judy looked a little surprised, more to see the messenger than to receive the message, but she obeyed the summons, and the two girls appeared in company though neither had spoken a word on the way.

"Well, Judy," Miss Keene greeted her, "I am glad Kathleen found you. I thought this would be a quiet hour for a little chat when most of the others are off blueberrying. There are several things I want to talk to you about. Are you happy down there at Mishanneke, and how are you and Annabel getting along?"

Judy drew a long sigh. "I'm not a bit happy, and I don't see how Annabel endures me, for I am just as hateful to her as I can be."

"Why, Judy!"

"It is the truth, Miss Keene. She gets on my nerves. The worse I treat her the more conciliatory

she becomes. Each time she humbles herself I feel like saying something more outrageous and there is no knowing where it will stop."

Miss Keene laughed. "Probably Annabel is getting wholesome discipline, but I am not so sure about you. There doesn't appear to be much evidence of self-control on your part whatever there may be on hers. Why do you act so, Judy?"

"Pure original sin, I suppose. I am continually doing those things which I ought not to do and leaving undone those things I ought to do." She spoke with perfect frankness and a trifle defiantly.

"I am afraid I have cut out too great a task for you," said Miss Keene after a pause. "I was hoping that you had arrived at a state where you could manage it alone, but I think you probably need a working partner. However, we will speak of that later; just now there is another matter uppermost. What do you think of Kathleen's offer from her aunt?"

Judy threw Kathleen a swift glance but said not a word.

Miss Keene went on as if entirely ignorant of any changed conditions. "I think it is a very important question and one which we three might be able to decide. You, her closest friend, and I, her Guardian, certainly love her too well not to consider her future good as the main issue, and as for Kathleen, herself, it is so



close a subject that perhaps her perspective would be at fault if she attempted to look at the matter entirely from her own point of view."

Both Kathleen and Judy sat with downcast eyes, but neither uttered a word.

"What do you think, Judy?" Miss Keene pressed home the question.

"I don't believe that anything I might say or think would have any influence upon Kathleen," returned Judy slowly and reservedly.

Miss Keene shook her head. "Judy, Judy, that doesn't sound like you. You want to be a Torch Bearer and yet you are not willing to guide others. I believed that you were showing qualities which would mark you as a leader. You have been happy and unselfish and all the girls like you."

Judy, with a sidelong glance at Kathleen, shook her head. "They don't all like me," she murmured.

Miss Keene paid no attention to this side remark. "Now, Judy dear, something is radically wrong. I tried to put you to the test with Annabel and you will not try to come up to the mark, and now when I ask you to this consultation that we may discuss the affairs of your best friend you are not interested. What is the matter, Judy?"

Judy sat in silence, but presently the tears began to drop upon her folded hands and she faltered out, "I

am so—so unhappy about—K-Kathleen, I can't think about anything else."

This was too much for Kathleen. She sprang up, rushed over to Judy, knelt by her side and clasped her closely. "Oh, Judy, dear Judy," she cried, "please don't be unhappy about me."

Judy's head dropped upon her shoulder and after a few whispered words they faced Miss Keene with wet eyes, then with hand clasped in hand they sat side by side to hear what she had to say next.

"Is it all right?" asked Miss Keene, looking smilingly from one to the other.

"I was such a goose to doubt Kath for one moment," said Judy contritely.

"But I was just as goosey," expostulated Kathleen.

"Then I have a pair of geese to deal with," said Miss Keene with a little laugh. "Now let's get down to business. What have you to say, Judy?"

"Of course I realize that it would be an advantage in many ways for Kathleen to go to Florida, but oh, Miss Keene, it would be so hard to give her up, and I don't see why she would have to go at once when I would be so glad to have her with me next winter."

"It isn't that I don't want to be with you, Judy darling," Kathleen put in, "but because I don't think it is fair to your parents and because I believe in independence for one who must make her own living, for

that is what it will mean if I decide not to go to Florida."

"Let's leave it to Miss Keene; at least let us hear what she thinks," said Judy amiably.

"I have been thinking," their Guardian began, "that it might be the wisest thing for Kathleen to finish the course of studies she has begun, and so equip herself with a profession in case she should ever need it. In a few years Mrs. Foster will probably be sending her children away to school and then she will need Kathleen much more than she does now when she has Miss Bolton with her as well as the children."

"Exactly," cried Judy eagerly, "and who knows what may happen in three years."

"But in the meantime," Kathleen objected, "there are my expenses to be considered."

"Oh, but the money which they gave you when you won the prize will pay your tuition, and the rest can be managed," declared Judy airily. "Probably your aunt will keep on sending you a check once in a while."

"But if I refuse her offer, would it be right to accept the checks?"

"What do you think, Miss Keene?" Judy turned to their friend.

"I think that depends. If Mrs. Foster has a reasonable mind and agrees with us that it would be well that Kathleen should continue her studies I do not see

any reason why Kathleen should not accept her help, but if she protests and feels aggrieved I agree with Kathleen that she could not well place herself under obligations."

"Then perhaps the best thing to do would be to lay the whole matter before Aunt Milly and find out how she does feel."

"But yet ——" Judy began but checked herself and looked inquiringly at Miss Keene who said, "I think that would be the wisest plan, and all that can be done at present, so I think we may dismiss the subject until Mrs. Foster can be heard from. There are one or two other things I wanted to talk about, but here come the girls and it is too late for any further discussion. We can continue this to-morrow."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HERMIT

ANNABEL was too pleased by Judy's sudden access of amiability to question the reason for it, but as close imitator, charged her own manner with an increase of graciousness which spoke well for her future popularity. She was further pleased when Judy announced that she was to return to Minnewawa and that Annabel was to go, too. Upon this newest lodge Annabel had always looked with envious eyes and felt herself especially selected for the honor because of her association with Judy.

The arrangement was due to Miss Keene who proposed it to Kathleen and Judy the day following their reconciliation. Etta Bowles, whose holiday was over, left them and her departure made a vacancy in Minnewawa. Betty Morrison, who was devoted to Kitty Acker, was made happy by being consigned to Pine Cradle, therefore Miss Keene asked Judy how she would like to return to her old quarters. "It will place you and Kathleen under the same roof, if not in the same room," she said, "and since you took such keen interest in making Minnewawa the star lodge I feel

that it isn't quite fair to take you from it. Moreover, I think you and Kathleen can work together for good, better than you could work alone. It will benefit Annabel to listen to your discussions, to hear your opinions and learn your points of view. She will learn more that way than if you hammered away at her singly, and you will all be happier, which is not the least consideration."

"Oh, Miss Keene, you are a perfect dear to think of it," said Judy enthusiastically. "I will admit that I have been homesick for Minnewawa, and I do miss Kath dreadfully. Indeed, I shall be happier."

Kathleen was not less pleased, and so the new group of Minnewawans started in together in a very promising frame of mind.

"We won't have to stick with Annabel every minute," said Judy. "We can get off for a walk together once in a while, for now that Annabel is making herself more agreeable the girls are nicer to her. She has her good points and is a dandy tennis player."

"What's the matter with a gentle hike this afternoon?" inquired Kathleen. "I have been wild to take that walk we planned, straight along the edge of the lake, but I couldn't go alone and I didn't want any one but you to go with me."

Judy shot her a tender glance. "Could you ever have believed we would act like such lunatics? I told

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you once that I didn't believe I could ever become a Torch Bearer, and I don't believe I ever shall."

"Oh, but Judy, Miss Keene tells us that failures sometimes count for more than successes, and if we have learned a lesson this time we should be far stronger than ever before."

"You dear thing, you do comfort one. No wonder I fell down on my job when I didn't have you at hand to boost me up."

"But Judy, I was weak as dish-water in the beginning and where should I be but for you?"

"You were far less spoiled than I to begin with, and hadn't the hateful things to combat. You weren't naturally jealous and spiteful, and fond of your own way."

"It wouldn't have done any good if I had been fond of my own way, not with Aunt Susan around," responded Kathleen laughing, "but I have had my own lions in the path, that horrid old self-pity one growls and shows his teeth at me every now and then, but I hope to down him yet. What about the walk, Judy? Can we go this afternoon?"

"Perhaps we'd better get track of Annabel first. I don't want to leave her in the lurch. Something was said about a game of tennis, and if that is on we can hike off with free consciences."

The tennis was found to be a settled plan, so the

two friends started off happily. "I feel particularly free," remarked Kathleen. "Two of the girls are going to see Aunt Mercy, so we have no call in that direction. Annabel is safely disposed of, and I have no stockings to darn."

"What about your letter to Mrs. Foster?"

"Went off in the noon mail. I got up at crack of day and wrote it before breakfast while the dew was on my thoughts."

Judy gave her a hug. "That sounds so Kathleenish; it does me good. My darling sister Thurensera, I don't believe I can ever give you up. It is so hard to get along without you now that I have discovered you. If you do have to go to Florida to live I shall marry the first man who is willing to be neighbor to you."

Kathleen laughed. "Then suppose my knight should come along and carry me off to my native heath, where would you be?"

"I'd be afther followin' ye, me dear."

"It is far more likely that I shall find you in the neighborhood of Brightwood when I go there to visit."

Judy made a little face at her and then dropped the subject, making the remark: "There seems to be a boys' camp just opposite here."

"Yes, I heard that they were Boy Scouts and last



night I heard their bugle sounding Taps. It came so sweetly and clearly, it made me think of Tennyson's Bugle Song. Look, Judy, at that loon. This walk grows wilder and wilder; there is no knowing what we shall discover before we get to the end of it."

Clambering over fallen logs, forcing their way through thickets, creeping along narrow paths, they followed the margin of the lake. The air was soft, yet spicy sweet where the sun beat out the odors from many pine and fir trees. White clouds were reflected in the lake. The songs of birds broke the stillness of the great forest. Further and further on the girls advanced, once in a while sitting down to enjoy the absolute solitude.

It was during one of these moments of rest that Kathleen suddenly raised her hand. "Listen!" she said. "It seems to me I hear music."

Judy listened but no sound came except the lapping of the water along the shore. "I don't hear anything," she said.

"There it is again," Kathleen declared after a moment's silence. "It appears to come from the woods further on."

"What does it sound like?" queried Judy.

"Like a fife or a flute. Pan, perhaps, piping to the wood-nymphs. How wonderful it would be to come upon him."

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Judy laughed at the fancy. "I'm afraid I haven't the poet's ear nor the poet's eye. You may both hear and see, but he will vanish before I find him."

"There it is again," cried Kathleen now surely convinced. "I am going to find out what it is. Don't you hear it, Judy?"

Thus appealed to Judy strove to be convinced and presently admitted that she did hear something which might be considered distant music. "Probably it is not," she declared. "No doubt we shall find some boy trying a whistle, or maybe it is the lumber mill at the head of the lake."

But Kathleen was convinced that neither of these could explain the sounds and avowed her intention of penetrating further to find out.

They took up their line of march again and as they progressed the strains came more clearly. Finally they saw, just ahead, a weather-beaten tent. Kathleen stopped short. "Sh!" she exclaimed, suddenly, lifting a warning hand, then, softly stealing forward, she beckoned to Judy and the two, peering through the bushes, saw a man sitting on a rude bench by the door of the tent. He was fifeing away merrily, and, as the girls watched, they beheld a pretty sight, for down from the trees fluttered a song sparrow and alighted upon the toe of the man's boot, then a tiny wren swinging upon a tall weed close by set up a rival melody.

Next, nearer and nearer, came the notes of a wood-thrush whose little speckled breast was presently seen upon an overhanging branch close to the man's head.

Breathlessly the girls watched orchestra and leader till the concert was over when they parted the bushes and went forward. The man rose to his feet and waited till they came up. "I hope we haven't interrupted your concert," said Judy. "We shall have to confess that we were a concealed audience, but we did enjoy it so much. Do you mind?"

"Not at all," replied the man. "I am glad you enjoyed it. My birds and I meet in this way every day and they have become very tame. If you will step back a little you can see them at their supper, for after the concert comes feeding time."

The girls took a position where they could see without being seen and presently the birds came flocking to pick up the grain scattered for them by their friend. He was a tall keen-eyed man, a trifle stoop-shouldered, roughly dressed, but gentle of speech. The birds fluttered around him fearlessly, alighting on his hat, feeding from his hand, swarming around his feet. When the last little pensioner had flown away the girls came from their retreat.

"It was perfectly lovely to see them," cried Judy.

"What patience you must have to be able to get them so tame," Kathleen said. "Have you been try-

ing it long? Do you come up to your camp quite early in the season?"

The man smiled. "I have been here seven years," he said.

"But not all the year around."

"Winter and summer. I came because the physicians said I should live in the open air. By the time my health was established I had become so fond of the life that I had no wish to change it."

"But don't you get dreadfully lonely?" Judy questioned, sympathy in her tones.

"Not half so lonely as I have been in a crowded city. I have friends who trust me, who do not care whether I wear an old coat or a new one, who never speak evil of me."

The girls looked a little puzzled.

"I mean," the man went on, "my forest friends, the beasts and birds who have learned to know me. The deer who come along that path you have just travelled over, the squirrels and rabbits. There was a lame fox which I rescued from a trap and kept all one winter. There was an old woodchuck which burrowed under my cabin and learned not to run away when I came out to sit with him in the sunshine. Then the birds at all times, though chiefly in spring and summer, of course. In bad weather I have my books and my fire."

"But doesn't it get frightfully cold?" Kathleen asked.

"Pretty cold sometimes, but I am inured to it and am prepared for it. Many times in my life when I lived further south in a warmer latitude I have felt the cold more than I do here."

"Don't you have to go a long way for provisions?" asked Judy.

"Across country the nearest village is six miles, but I take my boat usually and go to the end of the lake, that is, unless it is frozen over. I have passed your camp several times this summer. I suppose you belong to Camp Kuequenáku."

"Oh, yes, we do. We are Camp Fire Girls. Do you know about us?"

The man smiled at Kathleen's girlish eagerness. "I know something of you. I have read of you and your doings."

"I hope you approve of us and are glad to have us for neighbors, but no, never mind, don't say you are, for very likely you would rather we would not be here. However, we will promise not to scare away your birds and beasts, and we will not tell of your hermitage if you don't want us to," Judy promised. "It would be horrid to have a whole lot of curious girls pouncing down upon you when you least expected."

"There might be times when I would resent it,"

replied the man truthfully, "but I shouldn't mind it so much if you hunted in pairs as you are doing to-day."

"It was your fife that lured us on," Kathleen told him.

The man nodded. "Sometimes I fife to the birds and sometimes I play on the flute. I have learned their calls and generally they are ready to answer. They are an interesting study."

"We think they are, but we do not have the time nor the opportunity to study them as you do. I wonder if you keep a record of them."

"That is one of my interests."

"Maybe some day you will publish your notes and we can see them, but, oh dear, we should not know they were yours because we don't know your name. I don't suppose you are an incarnation of St. Francis of Assisi, nor of Thoreau?" Judy said cajolingly.

"I am only plain Samuel Perry, old Sam Perry, as they call me about here, 'a queer old Dick that lives by himself, and is none too friendly with his neighbors,'" he quoted.

The girls felt the moment had come for them to take their leave, and they spoke their farewells, which were returned with perfect politeness but with no accession of warmth. They looked back when they had gone a short distance, but their hermit was not interested

enough to gaze after them, for he had gone into his tent.

"He isn't what I would call a genial person," remarked Judy, "although you couldn't exactly call him grouchy. He was perfectly polite, but I think he was glad to get rid of us and hopes we will never come again."

"How different from Aunt Mercy. It is queer that we should have happened upon two solitary individuals, though they are as different as day and night. Our Sam Perry seems like a man with a history while Aunt Mercy's past is an open page. This man makes you feel as if there were nothing you could do for him, and that he wouldn't thank you for offering, while Aunt Mercy is just the opposite."

"Well," returned Judy, "one is a product of the country and the other of the city. I imagine he has had some embittering experience which has made him flee the haunts of men."

"But he said he came for his health."

"He didn't have to come up to the state of Maine to get fresh air, and he didn't have to bury himself away off here in this lonely spot unless he preferred to. No, he is a man with a past."

"You don't think he is criminal, do you?"

"No, though he may have suffered from suspicion, unjustly perhaps, yet I don't believe that is what is the

matter. He may have had some great sorrow, some disappointment, have failed in something he wanted to undertake, or something like that."

"I don't suppose we shall ever find out, though I have enough curiosity to want to know. You notice that he did not ask us to come this way again. I don't think we'd better tell any one but Miss Keene about him, for I am sure he would rather we let him alone."

"But, oh dear, he is such a discovery and his fiving to the birds and making friends with the woodsy creatures gives us such nice stuff to tell."

"Then we'll leave it to Miss Keene whether we shall tell the others or not."

Miss Keene decided that there was no reason why the two girls should not have the pleasure of telling about their discovery, but advised the rest not to intrude upon the hermit, as they called him. "I don't see why none of us found out about him before," she said, "when he is comparatively near."

"His tent is so hidden by the trees and bushes that we never would have found it but for the sound of the fife," Judy told her. "There is a pathway to it, but you wouldn't notice it going along the shore. We climbed up the bank and saw the tent down in a little hollow. We wanted so much to see the inside, but we were not invited."

"Naturally," said Miss Keene, laughing. "A lone



born male is not liable to have a show dwelling to display to inquisitive young misses."

"Just the same we mean to go that way again some day and maybe we shall have better luck," declared Judy.

The other girls were, of course, much excited at learning that "a real hermit" dwelt so near them, and impatiently waited permission to take a walk along the lake. Miss Keene advised them to wait a week out of consideration to the man. "We don't want him to think we are prying and are bound to intrude upon his privacy," she told them, but at last two of the older girls set out.

"We mean to go a peg better than you did," boasted one of them to Judy. "Just wait till we get back and we will tell you tales."

"Don't crow yet," Judy warned her. "Perhaps you will not even see his exclusive Majesty."

"Oh, you needn't be so toplofty. Of course we shall see him."

But about sundown two girls appeared at Minnewawa. "Where are those two deceivers?" they demanded.

"What are you talking about? What deceivers?" replied Evelyn who happened to be the only one on hand.

"Judy and Kathleen. They have led us a pretty

dance. Just wait till we get hold of them. Where are they ? ”

“ They went to the spring to fill their buckets. They will be back directly.”

In a few moments the two water-bearers appeared. The two callers rushed at them. “ We have half a mind to souse you well,” cried Nannie Bates, the older of the two. “ The idea of your telling that cock-and-bull story and sending us off on a fool’s errand.”

“ What are you talking about ? ” asked Judy innocently.

“ About you and Kathleen, who else ? Pretending you had discovered a hermit. What imaginations you have, to be sure. We must give you credit for making up a pretty good story and carrying it off mighty well, but we don’t enjoy being the victims.”

“ I wish you’d explain,” said Kathleen setting down her bucket of water.

“ Oh, you’re very innocent. We were going to carry on the tale, but we couldn’t be so mean to the other girls as you.”

“ Is she crazy ? ” Kathleen inquired of Judy. “ Have you any idea what she is trying to say ? ”

“ Not the faintest. Will you please to descend from your high horse, Nannie Bates, and talk plain English. What reason have you to think we didn’t discover our hermit ? If he isn’t one what is he ? ”

"A creature of air, a figment of your brains. In other words, there ain't no hermit. There ain't no old tent. There ain't no fife nor nothin'."

"Then you missed the place."

"Didn't you say it was about opposite the little island near our last picnic ground?"

"Yes."

"And that you climbed the bank by a big sycamore tree, walked a few rods toward the west and saw the tent in a little hollow?"

"Correct, madam."

"We did all that. We found the sycamore and the hollow but not a sign of a tent."

"I don't understand it. Kathleen, perhaps he is a magician, and that was why he could charm the birds. There was something queer and unusual about him, you know."

"I don't understand it, either," confessed Kathleen. "The tent must be there. I'll tell you what we will do, we will ask Miss Keene to let us go with you tomorrow and find the place. It is positively too uncanny. I can't believe the place doesn't exist. There must be another sycamore tree and you missed the way somehow."

Satisfied that she was telling the truth Nannie and her companion agreed and the next day the four set out upon their tour of investigation. They found the

old sycamore readily enough. They climbed the bank and turned toward the west. They found the hollow, but not a trace of the tent.

Judy and Kathleen looked at each other aghast. "We couldn't have dreamed it," they murmured.

"Let us go on to the very spot," Judy proposed.

This they did, but beyond broken branches, trampled bushes, the print of horses' hoofs and the mark of wheels they saw nothing which would indicate a human habitation. The little worn path was still there, to be sure, but he who had used it had departed, and it was long before they heard of him again. Once or twice those paddling their canoes upon the lake heard a faint, far fifeing, but it was too elusive to locate.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BUGLE CALL ACROSS THE LAKE

**K**ATHLEEN and Judy, with Annabel as an undesired third, were starting forth to follow a canoe full of girls who were off for the little town where some one always had an errand, generally two or three.

"I don't see why we have to be restricted in the amount of money we spend for candy and such things," complained Annabel when they were fairly started. "I never am at home, and it seems so silly to be told we can't have this or that as if we were little primary school children."

"If we were all blest with the proper amount of common sense we wouldn't have to be restricted," returned Judy, softly dipping her paddle in the clear water, "but Miss Keene doesn't want a hospital and I wouldn't trust the girls if they were given free swing. You are improving somewhat, Annabel my child, but I'll venture to say that if you had your way you would buy five pounds of candy this blessed day and by this time to-morrow there wouldn't be a piece left."

"Of course not, if I allowed all the girls to help themselves," returned Annabel in an aggrieved tone.

Judy laughed. "That's one on us, Kathleen," she said. "I hope I have learned to stop in time, but I couldn't answer for Evelyn, for example. She does love sweet things and cannot give them up even though she knows she could lose pounds if she weren't so considerate of that sweet tooth of hers. As for you, Annabel, you could improve your complexion mightily if you were a little more careful of your diet."

"Oh, dear, I don't see why one must do unpleasant things all the time," objected Annabel. "I never was so lectured and so found fault with in all my life as since I came to this horrid place."

"Don't you be calling it a horrid place," cried Judy sprinkling Annabel with a few drops from her paddle. "I don't see why you must be the only one to be dissatisfied. I should think you would hate it. Be a sport, old girl, and face the music. I don't see what you are whining about, anyway. We come to camp to be free and happy. One doesn't look for all sorts of city luxuries. The fun of the thing is in living in this simple way and in forgetting clothes and social obligations. I don't believe you care a hang for nature. What shall we do with her, Kath? Douse her in the lake or set her ashore on a desert island till she learns to behave herself better?"

Annabel looked greatly injured. It was always too much for her when Judy appealed to Kathleen in this way. Kathleen, however, only smiled at the aggrieved one and said, "Rome wasn't built in a day, Judy. Don't keep badgering Annabel so. She will learn of her own accord just as we have learned what is good for us."

"I suppose I am an impatient sort of a somebody," returned Judy contritely. "I go at things with hammer and tongs. It is a wonder you don't fairly dislike me, Annabel."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," returned Annabel brightening up, "and maybe you are right about the candy. Mother is always telling me I eat too much of it. If ever I get strength of mind enough I will try that stunt of going without for three months."

"That would be fine," declared the other two girls with one accord.

"Why don't you begin now while you are at camp?" inquired Kathleen. "You could gain a red honor, and you know you love the red beads. I will tell you what, if Judy will follow suit I will do the same and then it won't be so hard. How about it, Judy? Are you ready to start to-day?"

"Barkis is willin'," replied Judy. "Anything for the good of the cause."

"I think you are both perfectly lovely," exclaimed

Annabel, giving Kathleen the first word of appreciation she had yet vouchsafed her. "You speak as if it were nothing at all, and yet you don't have to do it. I am crazy for more red beads. Most I have, I have won by playing games and doing folk dances. I am working up to the swimming, and when winter comes there will be skating and things. Do you suppose," she said wistfully, after a moment's silence, "that I shall ever become a Wood Gatherer?"

Judy gave Kathleen a swift glance over her shoulder before she answered: "About as soon as I shall become a Torch Bearer." This was the very first indication of a real ambition in the right direction that Annabel had shown. The little spark was beginning to kindle.

"Oh, but you do such great things," protested Annabel. "It seems so easy for you to win honors."

"It isn't winning the honors so much as it is learning to follow the Law of the Fire," said Kathleen quietly.

"I know," returned Annabel, "but that is much harder. I might learn to get a real hold upon the first things, but I don't see how I can ever obey the last two. How can I glorify work when I hate it, and how can I be happy when it isn't in me to be?"

"I shouldn't wonder if it were in all of us, if we went about the right way to find it," responded Judy.

Annabel sighed. "The other girls are all so far



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ahead of me. They say they are happy, and they talk about things in a way that seems so far beyond me. I don't believe I have the making of a Camp Fire Girl in me."

"Oh, but you have," protested Kathleen. "Let us help you, Annabel. We'll have an experience meeting some day, and when you learn what a pair of whiners we used to be you will think yourself quite a cheerful little playmate."

"Dear me, look how far the others are ahead," cried Judy. "While we have been talking they have been paddling. Go to it, Kath."

They gave their attention entirely to their task of catching up with the other canoe, but presently their attention was arrested by a call from across the lake, and, dipping their paddles more leisurely, they waited for a rowboat, which had put off from shore and was rapidly making its way toward them. It was rowed by a muscular pair of arms belonging to one of two occupants of the boat. As the boat approached one of the young men in it shouted, "Canoe, ahoy! Who are you?"

"Camp Fire Girls from Camp Kuequenáku. Who are you?" came the reply.

"Boy Scouts from Camp Winnegen," came promptly back. Then, "Do you know where the Muskoday Camp Fire Girls have their camp?"

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"We belong to the Muskoday Camp Fire, but our camp is Kuequenáku." Judy gave the information, and was surprised by a shout of "Hooray! We're all right, Fred."

The boat was now quite near, and suddenly Judy exclaimed excitedly, "See, Kathleen! See who it is."

Kathleen steadied the canoe and turned to look. "Fred Furnival, as I live, and—no—yes, it is Sig Eckert. Isn't that great?"

The girls plied their paddles again and soon the boat and canoe were abreast. After greetings had been exchanged the boys asked: "Where are you going?"

"To the village," the girls answered. "You see that canoe away ahead? We are supposed to keep up with that, and look at us."

"Get in the boat with us and we will overtake them in a jiffy," proposed Fred. "I say, girls, but this is great. We knew you were somewhere along the lake. We have been asking every one if they could tell us where the Muskoday Camp Fire Girls had their camp, but no one knew."

"Of course not, for Muskoday wouldn't apply to the camp here, although it was just right, and is just right for us as a group," Judy responded.

Judy and Kathleen were able to board the boat without difficulty, but Annabel was suddenly very helpless, giving many little squeals and teetering about

so uncertainly that it required the combined efforts of Fred and Sig to get her aboard safely. Judy and Kathleen exchanged amused looks but made no comment. With the canoe in tow they started off, the vigorous strokes of the boys bringing them to the wharf at the end of the lake, almost as soon as the rest.

"We stopped to change horses," Judy announced laughingly as she stepped ashore where Miss Keene and her girls were waiting.

"And where did you pick up Fred and Sig?" asked Miss Keene, going forward to greet the boys, whom she knew well.

"In midstream," Judy told her.

"Did you drop from the skies in an aeroplane?" inquired Miss Keene, turning to Fred.

"No, just came in plain boat," was the reply. "We have been trying for two days to find you all. We were misled by thinking your camp and your Camp Girls went under the same name."

"Tilda knows the name of the camp," Kathleen remarked.

"And wasn't it just like her never to tell us?" said Sig, who, like many brothers, had no great opinion of his sister's powers.

"But do tell us how you two happen to be here?" Miss Keene said. "Is all your troop here?"

"No, only a few of us," Fred told her. "All of the boys couldn't come, but a few of us had a chance to join forces with those at Camp Winnegen. I know Billy Wheeler, the Scout Master, and we fixed it up last week."

"What does Winnegen mean?" asked Judy. "It is a nice sounding name."

"It means a good thing. The boys say they know a good thing when they see it, and their camp ground struck them as a very good one when they came upon it."

"Isn't that just like boys?" said Judy turning to Miss Keene. "Now, girls would never think of such a name."

"Of course not," Sig put in. "They always want something sentimental, like drooping willows or murmuring winds. Boys like something with pep in it."

"And quite rightly," Miss Keene agreed with him. "It makes a pleasant variety. But, girls, we must get to business. What have you to do, Judy?"

"I want to go to Wise's for my watch, and Kathleen wants something at Becker's."

"Mayn't we go with you?" Fred spoke up.

Miss Keene nodded assent. "You boys go with Judy and her party. The rest of us have errands in the opposite direction. We will meet at the wharf in an hour. The first to arrive will wait for the others."

The little company divided, that composed of the three girls and two boys went down the shaded street of the little village to turn in at the door of the shop, nominally a drug store, but really offering a variety of other things, stationery, books, toys, confectionery, fancy articles and such like wares.

"Good!" cried Fred. "Here is where we have our innings. What shall it be, girls? Ice-cream? Soda water? Sundae?"

"No, kind sir," responded Judy with a decided shake of the head. "None of those delutherin' snares. We've sworn off."

"Oh, but I say," Sig put in, "you'll have a box of candy. Of course you will. What kind do you like best, Kath? Chocolates?"

"Not a cand; not a choc," responded Kathleen solemnly.

"Oh, but just this once to celebrate the occasion," Sig coaxed.

"Nay, nay, kind sir."

"How about you, Miss Annabel?" inquired Fred. "Are you all three in the same box?"

Annabel looked pleadingly at Judy. To be able to show the other girls a box of candy presented to her by Fred Furnival was a triumph difficult to forego.

"I—at least—we hadn't really begun," she stammered.

"Don't fall down on your resolution the very first

thing," Judy whispered to Annabel. "Stand to your guns, Annabel," she said aloud.

"Why not put it off a week?" asked Fred.

"No," Judy was firm. "We said we would start with to-day, and I, for one, mean to keep my word."

"What are you doing it for anyhow?" asked Sig. "Is it for blue beads, or because you are training for a race or something? Isn't a box of candy worth as much to you as a little old measly bead?"

"It isn't the beads; it is the principle of the thing," Judy told him. "If we haven't enough self-control to give up a little thing like candy what are we worth? Don't you suppose we are dying to go back to camp armed with toothsome candies, and aren't you mean to keep on tempting us? I appeal to you as soldiers and gentlemen to desist from your appeals to our gross appetites."

"She's got us, Sig," said Fred laughing.

"How long are you going to keep this thing up?" asked Sig, still reluctant to give up.

"All summer," replied Judy calmly.

Annabel breathed a long sigh. It was the first time in her life that she had been forced into such self-denial, and she felt the sacrifice to the depths of her shallow little heart.

The matter of sweets being settled the girls attended to their purchases while the boys wandered around

the shop looking over the various articles offered for sale.

Presently Fred sauntered up to Judy. "I suppose there isn't any objection to fruit," he said.

"Not the slightest," returned Judy. "In fact, in these diggings where it doesn't ripen early we are always very grateful for it. Blueberries and blackberries we can have for the picking, and later on there will be apples and pears, but just now the berries have to serve."

Fred rejoined Sig and the two consulted together for a few moments after which there was a parley with the storekeeper and finally the boys came triumphantly forward with a basket of such fruit as they were able to buy.

"Peaches!" cried Judy. "How lovely. I have been dying for some. Plums, too, and oranges and bananas. Are those grapes that I see? Young gentlemen, you have done yourselves proud."

The basket of fruit was consigned to Sig's tender care and the company sallied forth. Annabel would have preferred the more individual gift of a box of candy, but it was something that she could share the pleasant attention and hear the exclamations which would follow when the basket was placed in the center of the supper table, so she was not ill pleased, and was even more complacent when Fred said, "I take off my hat

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to you girls, for I think it was downright heroic in you to stick to your colors." Later on she overheard him saying to Judy: "Of course, Jude, we boys like to kid with girls, and we like all the fluffy ruffles business, but when a girl shows up as you did this afternoon it just puts her up on a pedestal." And this remark set Annabel thinking.

"Isn't Fred Furnival just splendid?" she said to Judy that evening. "I am crazy about him, aren't you?"

"Why, I don't know," returned Judy indifferently. "I have known him for years and years and he doesn't strike me as anything so very remarkable. He's a nice boy, quite a nice boy, but I don't know that I should ever consider him splendid."

Annabel, however, felt that a summer which brought her an acquaintance with Fred Furnival was not to be underrated, neither was Kathleen to be despised when she was on such good terms with Fred, and although the motive which added graciousness to Annabel's manner might not be considered the best, yet the results were such that every one began to notice the girl's improvement. Meantime her various points of view were unconsciously changing. She took a livelier interest in matters which she had previously ignored, and many things which she had professed to scorn she was now ready to treat with a reasonable amount of favor. The



camp of the Boy Scouts across the lake became a charmed spot. "Don't you love to hear their bugle call across the lake?" she said sentimentally to Judy.

"Why, yes, of course," said Judy without any show of enthusiasm, "but so do I like to hear ours."

"Oh, but it is so thrilling to listen to the other," Annabel continued to sentimentalize.

Judy laughed. "They do theirs a little better than we do, but not enough better to make me rhapsodize over it. Don't get any more feather-brained than you can help, Annabel. You are becoming more sensible in some directions and I am beginning to quite have hopes of you. Don't go and spoil it all getting up romantic ideas about those boys, just because they are boys."

"Oh, but Judy, they are such dear boys."

"That is what their mothers think, no doubt," replied Judy.

Getting but little sympathy from her roommate, Annabel ceased her ecstasies, though her thoughts followed the moonpath across the lake to the white tents and she wondered in which lay the hero of her dreams.

She was roused from her reverie by a voice from Judy's cot: "What are you doing, Annabel? If you are seeking beauty you may continue the operation for five minutes longer, but if you are simply mooning you'd better stop and go to bed, or you will not want

to get up in the morning. If you are aiming to be a Camp Fire Girl you have to hold on to health, and it isn't the best thing in the world to be sitting there in that thin nightgown."

Annabel's thoughts came trailing back over the moonpath and took a sudden turn toward the scene of their last Council Fire. Her two months of probation were nearly up. Would Miss Keene think that she was worthy to become a Wood Gatherer when the next Council Fire should take place? She felt quite solemn as she thought of it, of the talks Miss Keene gave to her girls, of the conversations between Judy and Kathleen, and if any one could have seen into Annabel's heart at that moment, to such a one would have been apparent a flickering flame born of that first faint spark.

## CHAPTER IX

### "BETWEEN YOU AND ME"

**A**FTER it became known that the Boy Scouts of Camp Winnegen and the Camp Fire Girls of Camp Kuequenáku were opposite neighbors there was a lot of visiting back and forth. Joint excursions and picnics, hikes and outdoor suppers were the order of the day. To their old chums, Fred Furnival and Sig Eckert, Kathleen and Judy told the story of Aunt Mercy, interesting them immediately in the good old lady.

"You'll have to take us to see her," said Fred. "We want to come in on this deal."

"We'll take you to see her," Judy promised, "but you can't claim her, for she is our special child of adoption; if you want any one you can take the hermit."

"The hermit?" Both the boys pricked up their ears at this interesting suggestion.

Judy nodded and then proceeded to give an account of their discovery and of the disappearance of the man and his tent.

"I say, Fred," said Sig, "it's up to us to re-discover him. I'll bet he is worth it."

"It looks to me as if he didn't care to be a discovery," remarked Fred.

"Not by girls, of course," returned Sig, whose years had not brought him to the point of girl worship.

Judy gave her head a little toss at this reflection upon her sex. "I'll venture to say he would much prefer us to a raft of boys," she said.

"Then what did he run away for?" inquired Sig with triumph.

"Because we were humans, not because we were girls. He was really very nice to us, but he didn't want the whole crowd to descend upon him and scare away his pets."

"Well, we aren't going to scare away his pets," protested Sig. "You put us wise about him, and said we could have him and now you object."

"Oh, I don't object," returned Judy. "The only thing I object to is your contempt of us."

"Gee!" cried Sig. "You're 'way off. I think you girls are all right. I never ran away from you, did I? And how can I be responsible for what your old hermit did?"

Fred laughed. "You're craw-fishing finely, Sig," he said. "You made base insinuations and you can't get out of it without eating a good big hunk of humble pie."

"I'll eat it," declared Sig now quite crestfallen. "Lead me to it, Judy, and I'll swallow the whole pie."

"I guess we may as well consider this incident closed, mayn't we, Judy?" suggested Fred:

"Oh, yes," she acquiesced graciously, "but I warn him if he does so again he will not only have to eat one pie but two. When can you boys go with us to see Aunt Mercy?"

"No time like the present," advised Fred. "What do you say?" He turned to Sig.

"Same here," was the reply, and it was not long before the four were on the road to the little white farmhouse.

They found Miss Blodgett hobbling around by the aid of a stick. "Jest rheumatiz," she explained after greeting her visitors. "I get a spell of it once in so often, but I can manage."

"Why didn't you call us up and let us know so that we could come and help you?" said Kathleen.

"Why, my dear, it never occurred to me. As long as I can manage it doesn't matter. Lands sakes, child, I've been heaps worse and got about, so why should I trouble you?"

"Because you are our Aunt Mercy and we like to do things for you."

"Seems though I ought not to let you," murmured Miss Blodgett protestingly.

Kathleen pushed her gently down into the big arm-chair. "Now you are going to sit right here and talk to

Judy," she averred, "while the boys and I go out and attend to Sukey and the chickens."

"Oh, but my dear," Miss Blodgett's voice arose in dissent, "I could not think of allowing the young gentlemen to do such a thing." She was not at her ease with these youths, and looked deprecatingly at them.

"Oh, but Miss Blodgett, we'd like to do it," spoke up Sig. "I know all about cows and chickens. I'll milk your cow and feed her while Fred attends to the chickens."

Miss Blodgett looked at Kathleen rather doubtfully. "I don't know as Sukey will like a man's hand," she said.

"Then I can do the milking and Sig can feed her." Kathleen settled it, and the three went out to drive in the cow and look after the chickens, leaving Judy to do the entertaining.

Judy felt that this was her opportunity to learn Aunt Mercy's attitude toward changes in her home. She began to question very diplomatically. "Suppose you had a legacy, Aunt Mercy, what would you do with it?"

"Why, my dear, that would depend upon how big it was," was the cautious answer.

"Suppose it were big enough for you to make any repairs or changes about the house or place, what would be the first thing you'd do?"

"I'd put a new roof on Sukey's stable, and tighten up the hen-house."

"And then what? We are playing that you could do anything you liked."

Aunt Mercy gave a little childish laugh. "Now, isn't it funny? That's one of the ways I amuse myself when I set here all alone. I look round and I say, Mercy Blodgett, supposing you could have your way, what would you do to this room, for instance?"

"And what would you do?" Judy asked eagerly. "What do you tell yourself you would do?"

"Well, I say I'd paint and paper first, and get a new carpet for the floor. I wouldn't like a dull one, for between you and me I like bright colors. I'd have real bright curtains, too; they'd be right sightly in winter when it is all so cold and gray outside. I'd keep the old haircloth furniture, for my father and mother and my brother sat in this very chair and on that sofy, and I would never take a thing out that was here when they was here, but I'd like to brighten it up a mite." Once started she was communicative enough.

"I think that is just what I should do," Judy agreed. "How about the table cover? Wouldn't you have a new one?"

"Oh, yes, I would if my money held out." She gave another little childish chuckle.

"And what sort of carpet would you have?" Judy encouraged her.

"Something real rosy and bright, I guess."

"And rosy curtains, too, I suppose, to match the carpet."

"Yes, indeed, and maybe if there was anything left over I would get a new picture or two, not that I don't enjoy the portraits and 'Washington crossing the Delaware,' not to say 'The death bed of Napoleon,' but sometimes I think I would like something more bright and cheerful. I suppose it is good for us to contemplate death and to be reminded of the sufferings of those who fought and died for our country, but long winter evenings I wish I could have something to remind me of summer. But there, I am rattling on as though I was crazy. There isn't a living soul on earth to leave me so much as a pair of mourning gloves, let alone money."

"But it isn't silly. I think it does one a lot of good to have dreams. Kathleen and I talk and talk about what we would do if certain things were to happen. I can't see that it does any harm."

"Well, it is a sort of comfort," confessed Aunt Mercy, "although my grandmother used to say that idle dreaming was sinful. Howsomever, between you and me and the gate-post, I get a good deal of pleasure out of it. You see, having nobody to talk to gets me in the habit of conversing with myself, and there don't seem to be many subjects that I and myself are interested in except the old place and the creatures."



She laughed again. "Seems though my tongue was let loose since you young folks came. Now here you are just turning my notions inside out. Don't seem rational that you'd be interested in my concerns, and I guess I am an old ranter, going on with all this farrago."

"Indeed, then, I just love it," insisted Judy. "Don't let's stop. If the money held out would you paint the rest of the house, and do other things?"

Thus tempted Aunt Mercy went on. "Oh, yes, I'd paint the whole house, paper my chamber, and put these mats up there."

"Get new curtains, too, for that room."

"You're making me too extravagant."

"Oh, no; you might as well do the whole thing at once and get it over with. Aunt Mercy, when is your birthday?"

"Dear me suz, what a question. I dunno as I remember. It's been so long since I kept account. But you look there in the old Bible and you'll find out. It's all down in my father's handwriting. There's several generations of us Blodgetts in the Family Register."

Judy went over to where the big Bible lay in state upon the antique table, and turning the leaves she came upon the register, finding at the very end the name of Mercy Blodgett, born Sept. 3, 1844. It

seemed like ancient history to the eighteen-year-old girl, and she turned back with a new feeling of surprise to the old lady. To think that at her age she should be doing such work as seemed an every-day matter to her. Judy was pleased, too, at her discovery of the date, for it meant that the birthday would occur while the girls were in camp and that they could celebrate it as they might choose.

Kathleen and the boys returned before there could be any further talk of day-dreams, so they returned to facts. "Sukey behaved beautifully," Kathleen announced. "I started to do the milking but Sig wanted to try his hand and she didn't mind it a bit. I strained the milk, Aunt Mercy, and set it away in the spring-house. We gave Maltie a saucerful, and we fed the chickens. There were only three eggs. I put them in the pantry."

Aunt Mercy looked at her affectionately. "My, my, my," she said, "what it is to have young folks about. I am much obliged to you all. I am sure I don't know what I can do to repay you."

"Just give us the fun of doing these things," Kathleen answered. "Now, Aunt Mercy, while this rheumatism is troubling you we are not going to let you go out into the damp grass to drive in Sukey and do such work."

"No, Miss Mercy," Sig spoke up. "What are we

for if we can't do a few little stunts like milking one cow and bringing in a few armfuls of wood? Fred and I are coming up every morning and evening to do those things. It doesn't amount to a row of pins and we shall be hurt to the core if you refuse to let us. We have filled up your wood-box in the kitchen and if there is anything else you would like us to do, please say it."

Miss Mercy began to protest, but she was overborne by the entire company and was obliged to give in, then they all left her, after extracting a promise that she would not leave the house and that she would call them up the next morning to report upon her rheumatism. The sad-eyed Rover felt that it was his duty to see the company to the gate. He was somewhat bewildered by the presence of the two boys, and at first resented their intimate connection with affairs, but after proper overtures upon their part accepted the situation, although still a little suspicious.

"Oh, people," cried Judy as soon as they were out of hearing, "I have such a lovely plan, and I want you all to come into it."

"Trot out your plan," said Sig, eager to make amends for past blunders.

"I have found out when Aunt Mercy's birthday is, and I have also discovered, without her knowing it, just what she would like to have done to some of her

rooms if she could afford it. Now, I propose that we, all hands of us, do the very best we can to carry out her desires. It will mean some work and some money, but I think we could accomplish it by all working together. The principal thing is to get her consent. She will resent anything that seems like taking more than she considers her due, and we shall have to be mighty careful, but I believe we can work it, if we use tact." Judy paused to take breath.

"Do go on," urged Kathleen. "I know what we have wanted to do, but I am crazy to find out how far it is within her desires."

"Well, it is this way. We had the loveliest talk. My dear, never say again that she is without imagination. How do you suppose she amuses herself in winter when she hasn't a soul to speak to for days? She converses with herself and tells herself what she would like to do if she could. She is as much of a child as any who plays at 'Let's pretend,' I want you to know. Well, she confessed that, 'between you and me and the gate-post,' she would love to do many things to brighten up the old house, and I propose that we set to and do it for her. She wants the cow stable shingled first thing, she would, you know."

"I could do that, easy enough," spoke up Sig. "I've had a lot of experience, not only at home, but, you

remember, Kath, at the schoolhouse when we fixed that up."

"Indeed I do remember," Kathleen agreed.

"I'll furnish the shingles," declared Fred.

"Good! then that job is off our hands," said Judy.

"The next is to tighten up the hen-house."

"Nothing at all to do. I noticed that it needs a little titivating, and it would take no time to do it. Go on with your rat killing, Judy," Sig spoke.

"The next is rather more complicated; it means paint and painters. Of course it would be nice to do the whole house, but if we could freshen up the 'settin'-room' and Aunt Mercy's bedroom it would do."

"Why not make a good job of it and have done?" said Fred. "We can get the whole troupe at it, if you say so."

"But where would the paint come from?" inquired Sig. "It costs like the dickens."

"We girls would gladly chip in," said Judy, "but I want very much to have us furnish carpet and curtains, and I am afraid we couldn't do both."

"I'll write to the governor and see if he won't help us out," said Fred. "I know he will do it, especially if he hears it is a pet scheme of yours, Judy. You know my father thinks Judy is the whole show," he explained to Sig.

"That would be perfectly lovely," said Judy grate-

fully. "It is nice of you to think of that, Fred. All I am worried over now is the dear old lady herself. I am so afraid she will not let us do it. She will think it too much. Perhaps I can get around her. At all events I shall do my best, and we will get Miss Keene to coöperate with us, so perhaps we can manage."

"I think it will be a great lark, myself," said Sig. "It won't be much of a distance to go, Fred, if we take the boats to the lower landing and start from there."

"Let us know as soon as the thing is settled," said Fred as they parted. "I shall want to write to Dad right away, for we haven't any too much time if we are to have everything ready by September third."

"I will talk to Miss Keene this evening, and we'll go again to Aunt Mercy's to-morrow. Don't forget, boys, about the milking and feeding."

"Trust us," they called back.

"If only we could surprise her," said Judy linking her arm in Kathleen's as she still continued the subject of Aunt Mercy. "It would take at least a day or two for the paint inside to dry and there would still be the curtains and things."

"We could take measurements and get those all done here," suggested Kathleen.

"I am wondering how we will get them. The car-

pet will be the principal thing, for we couldn't send for samples for that. If the thing goes through I don't know but it is up to us to take a trip to Portland. It is a dear little city, and I would like you to see something of it. We have none too much time, however, so it would have to be a flying visit. I'll talk it over with Miss Keene. You can't imagine, Kathleen, how that dear old thing did enjoy talking and playing pretend. She said she didn't know when she had had such a good time."

The interview with Miss Keene showed that she quite approved of Judy's scheme, although she was afraid they were attempting too much, and said she feared Miss Blodgett would never consent to such wholesale improvements. The outside of the house would do well enough for the present, she thought, and could wait till the next summer. The inside improvements and the repairs to cow stable and hen-house would be all sufficient in her opinion, and as much as they could expect Miss Blodgett's consent to.

Judy, therefore, called up Camp Winnegen, told the boys what had been determined upon and then set forth upon what she said was her "errand of Mercy." She decided, and Miss Keene agreed, that it would be best for her to make the visit alone, as Aunt Mercy's confidences had been for her ear only, and might be withheld from another.

It was late in the afternoon when she returned, but Kathleen, on the watch for her, saw triumph in her eye. She joined her at the top of the hill, and could scarcely wait for the report. "Well, Judy?" she cried.

"It's been like rolling a rock up-hill," Judy began, "but I got it there finally. The boys were on hand bright and early and came again just before I left. They are good youngsters."

Kathleen laughed. "From the height of your superior years how condescendingly you look down upon them. How much older are you than Fred did I understand?"

"Don't be a goose," returned Judy biting her lip. "You know I am two years younger than he."

"And Sig is one year younger than Fred, which makes both of them older than you."

"But boys are never so mature as girls at the same age. Don't let us discuss them. I want to tell you about Aunt Mercy."

"And I want to hear. Go on."

"Well, of course she flouted at the whole idea, but when I put it upon the basis of her affection for us she began to waver. I didn't let her know just how much we intended to do, but I spoke of the papering and painting, for that much she will have to know, and at last she consented to go into her spare room to sleep



for a week, and let us have the sitting-room, too, for the work."

"Do you suppose her curiosity will allow her not to peep?"

"With that Puritan conscience? No indeed, my dear, if she says she will not, wild horses couldn't drag her."

"Are we to give her some sort of a birthday jollification?"

"Why, I don't know. I think the best plan will be to allow her to have the surprise all to herself, at first, and then maybe late in the day we can go over and have a sort of supper, not a real picnic, for that might mean too much excitement for one day, but we can have handings around, lemonade and cake. We can bake her a birthday cake. Don't you believe that will be best?"

"I certainly do, for, as you say, anything more might mean too much excitement for her. When do you start in, Judy?"

"As soon as ever we can. I am going now to telephone the boys to bring along their shingles, and we will start off for Portland just as soon as Miss Keene can arrange for us to go." They started on down the hill, coming upon groups of girls from time to time, to whom they imparted their news, so the excitement spread, and Aunt Mercy's surprise was the uppermost

topic for that evening at least. It appeared that to keep the affair within the limits of Judy's original plan was going to be an impossibility, for every one wanted a part in it and finally it resolved itself into a veritable surprise party when every one should be present and each make some offering. Less than that would mean that many of the girls would feel aggrieved, and so it was at last decided that an old-fashioned birthday party might not come amiss to one who still lingered lovingly over the merrymakings of her youth.

## CHAPTER X

### AUNT MERCY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

UPON the day that the boys began to shingle the cow stable Kathleen, Judy and Miss Armitage started for Portland.

"What with our own shopping and the commissions from the girls it looks to me as if we should never get through in one day," remarked Kathleen looking at her list.

They arrived in the clean, bright little city in good time and started at once to look for the rosy carpet.

The carpet being Judy's individual gift, and the most important one, the other two agreed that it should be attended to first. It was a purchase that consumed some time, for Judy was particular, having made up her mind that it must be just such a pattern and just such colors. "It must be bright, but soft in coloring," she instructed, "not too large a pattern, but not too indefinite." At last, after many rolls had been displayed, they decided upon one whose roses were not too glaringly brilliant, and whose pattern was graceful enough for Judy's taste. The measurements of the

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room had been carefully taken and a promise was exacted that the carpet should be sent within the next two days.

"Oh, Judy," said Kathleen as they left the shop, "it is a perfect beauty. Any one might be proud to have it, but what a lot it cost. Weren't you very extravagant?"

"Perhaps I was," acknowledged Judy, "but one has a chance to spend so little up here, and Dad gave me an extra big check over and above my allowance, so I think I can afford it. Now let us see how much we have for curtains."

Kathleen produced the slip of paper upon which she had written down the amounts contributed by the various girls and announced the sum. "There should be more than enough," she said, "but if there is any left we can get a table cover, or perhaps some cheap white curtains for the bedroom. Perhaps we can happen upon some bargains."

"But what about the pictures?" asked Judy. "We must be sure to get a couple."

"Yes, but they needn't be expensive ones. I don't think Aunt Mercy is much of an art critic."

"The old dear, of course she isn't, but we cannot, for our own sakes, give her anything too terrible."

"Don't bother about the pictures," spoke up Miss Armitage. "Miss Keene and her councilors want to

give those, so you need not give another thought to them."

"Fine!" exclaimed the girls. "Then let us go on the war-path for the curtains," said Judy.

Up and down the long, pleasant street they travelled and in and out the various shops till the rosy curtains were found at a price which admitted the addition of the table cover and some simple white stuff to be manufactured into curtains for the upper room.

Entirely satisfied with their expedition they set their faces toward camp the next morning, speculating, as they drew near, upon the happenings which might have taken place during their absence.

"Do you suppose the boys have finished the shingling?" said Kathleen.

"And do you suppose the paint has come?" Judy wondered.

A bevy of girls crowded the little wharf as the motor boat drew up. "Did you get the carpet? Could you find curtains that would do? Did you get my shoes? Could you match my worsted?" The questions came thick and fast.

"Shoo! Shoo! Shoo!" cried Miss Armitage. "You will drive us crazy. Give us leeway and we will tell you everything."

"We've had a perfectly fine trip," said Kathleen



lacked in years he made up in spirits and was the life of the party.

"I don't know how we shall ever get the carpet here without Aunt Mercy's seeing it," Kathleen voiced the difficulty. "Of course the dear woman wants to see all that she can, and I don't wonder. If she has been out to look at the cow stable once she has done so a hundred times. We can get the curtains here easily enough but what about the carpet?"

"That's easy, too," declared Billy. "We can bring it over in the motor boat and hide it in the bushes till dark and then bring it up."

"But what about tacking it down?" spoke up Molly Ludlow. "She will hear the noise and guess right away."

"Right-o," said Billy. "We'll have to think of a way out of that. Here, Sig, you have a fertile brain; what's to be done about tacking down that carpet?"

Sig paused in the act of putting a sweeping stroke of paint upon a door panel and looked up. "That is a facer, isn't it? We'll have to get the old lady out of the way somehow. I suppose she goes to bed with the chickens and would hear us." He stood, brush in hand, thinking over the situation while the rest worked at windows, doors and surbase. "We shall get this done to-day," he went on, "and by day after to-morrow it should be dry."

The following information was obtained from the records of the [redacted] Department, [redacted] Office, [redacted] City, [redacted] State, [redacted] Country, [redacted] Continent, [redacted] Hemisphere, [redacted] Planet, [redacted] Galaxy, [redacted] Universe.

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something which they thought would do and the boys hung it, making a fairly good job of it.

At last all was ready. The carpet had been smuggled in, the curtains were hung, the table cover laid. Up-stairs the simple white curtains and the fresh paint brightened up the dingy bedroom. The braided mats were laid upon the floor, and in addition to the two cheerful pictures hung on the walls below, were two smaller ones for the upper room.

"I'd like to have done the whole room over," said Judy when they had put the finishing touches to the bedroom, "but I suppose we shall have to be satisfied. Certainly it is a great improvement. It looks cheerful at least, which is the main thing."

September the second had arrived. The work, except the tacking of the carpet, was all done. In the living-room waited four or five boys. The girls had made an excuse to take Aunt Mercy out to the furthest end of the side porch. "Now, Aunt Mercy," Judy began, "to-morrow morning you can go into those two rooms and see how nicely we have painted them. We have done it all ourselves, so you needn't be worried over our having hired help. Anything else than fresh paint that you see you may know to be birthday gifts."

"My lands sake, child, you don't mean you've been getting anything?"

"Oh, just a few things we thought you might

like for your birthday," returned Judy nonchalantly. "What's the use of having an Aunt Mercy if we can't celebrate her birthday? We are so much obliged to you for having it at this time of year when we can have some fun. There isn't a thing coming in between Fourth of July and Thanksgiving, and you have just saved the situation by having a birthday."

"But I didn't want you to do a nameable thing except that painting, and that's too much."

"You don't mean you would deprive us of all the good time we have been having here together? Why, it has been like a picnic every day!"

"So't has. Well, there, I won't say another word. It don't seem as though I could get used to having things done for me, but you say you enjoy it and I guess I'll have to let it go at that. Land alive! What's that?" For at a given signal from a corner of the cow stable came the first strains of "America."

"It is the boys. They have come to serenade you," cried Kathleen rising to her feet.

Aunt Mercy lifted her hands and waved them up and down. "What next? What next?" she murmured. "At my age to be having a serenade. I've heard tell of such things, but I never looked to have one come to my own door."

The boys went bravely through with "America," and then started up "Yankee Doodle" with much

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vigor. So valiantly did the drum beat and the fife shrill out that the sound of the hammers tacking away at the carpet was completely lost, or at all events was unnoticed. Familiar old melodies followed: "The Old Oaken Bucket," "Believe me if all those endearing young charms," "Flow gently, sweet Afton," and "Home, sweet Home." At the last "The Star Spangled Banner" came rousinglly and then the band departed as mysteriously as it had come while all was silent in the "settin'-room."

Aunt Mercy, who had been beating time with one hand, stopped in order to wipe the tears from her eyes. "It's beyond belief," she said. "I s'pose I hadn't ought to have such thoughts, but it did seem almost as if it was a heavenly choir coming that way like they was flying and going just as silent. Seems 's though it might be, only I guess angels wouldn't be playing 'Old Oaken Bucket.' Why, even Rover liked it, and he ain't one to be pleased with such a thing. I didn't hear a bark nor a whine from him."

The girls did not tell her that, fearing some display of disapproval on Rover's part, Sig, to whom Rover had attached himself with an unusual show of devotion, had given him a hearty meal and had kept him in the house with him till the serenaders should be gone. As for Maltby he had curiosity enough to sit on the fence where he could see both his mistress and her friends

on the porch as well as the serenaders behind the cow stable.

The sun was going down when the girls bade Aunt Mercy good-night with many charges not to go into the closed rooms till the morning. "We will come up in the course of the day to wish you all sorts of happiness," said Judy as she took her leave.

"It don't seem's though there could be any more coming," replied Aunt Mercy. "I guess I'll dream about that music all night. It was a kind thought of those young men to give an old woman such pleasure, although I suppose you girls were at the bottom of it."

"No, we were not," Judy told her. "It was Fred Furnival who first thought of it."

"I shall be pleased to thank him and all of them," returned Aunt Mercy, in her sedate little way.

Then the girls went off to be joined by the four boys a little further down the road.

"It went off beautifully," cried Kathleen as they came up. "We didn't hear the hammers at all, or rather I was listening and did hear a faint tapping, but the boys certainly did some vigorous playing, and saved the day."

"It was worth it, too," said Molly, "for it was a perfect joy to see how delighted Aunt Mercy was. I wish you could have seen and heard her."

It was not till afternoon of the next day that the merry troupe of young people appeared at Aunt Mercy's front gate. She was sitting on the porch arrayed in her Sunday best, her string of gold beads hung round her neck and her gray hair smoothly arranged, when the advance guard, in the persons of Kathleen and Judy, came up.

"Many happy returns, Aunt Mercy," they said gaily as they leaned over to kiss her.

"Now tell us," said Judy, always eager to get at facts, "how early was it when you went into the sitting-room?"

Aunt Mercy smoothed down her apron and looked up with a tender smile. "Well, my dear, to tell you the truth I haven't been in either room as yet."

"You haven't!" Judy looked her surprise. "Why not?"

"Well, you see I thought it over and it didn't seem quite fair when you had been to all that trouble for me not to wait and share my pleasure with you, so I have just been waiting till you came. I felt I should enjoy it more if you were all there. I have done so many things alone that seems 's though when I had a real pleasant thing coming along I'd like to have company. 'Twouldn't seem quite so lonesome."

"You dear," murmured Judy as she bent over to give her another kiss. "Well, here we all are, a big com-

pany of us boys and girls. You must head the procession and lead the way when they have all come."

She ran out to the gate to speak to those now arriving. "Think of it, girls and boys," she said, "Aunt Mercy wouldn't have her surprise till we were here to share it with her. Sig, you and Fred just take the cake and lemons and things round to the kitchen. We will attend to them after a while. How many are here? Not more than a dozen? The others said not to wait? Very well, then we will go ahead. I think that as long as those who really did the work are on hand it will be better not to wait for more."

The boys deposited the baskets and then came back to offer their greetings to Aunt Mercy who, a little tremulous, but smiling, held her reception with gracious dignity. Judy was fairly dancing with impatience but finally was able to marshall her company, Fred with Aunt Mercy on his arm leading the way. Kathleen had slipped into the room before the rest in order to set a vase of fresh flowers on the table and to draw up the blinds.

"Shut your eyes, Aunt Mercy, shut your eyes," cried Judy, "till we tell you to open them."

Smilingly Aunt Mercy obeyed, and Fred led her to the center of the room. "Now!" cried Judy again.

For an instant Aunt Mercy looked around bewildered, then she sank into the nearest seat. "It's too much,

too much," she murmured. "It's not right I should have it. No, 'tain't right."

"You wouldn't have us take it all out again, would you?" asked Judy going up to her and taking one of the hard worn hands in hers. "If you only knew how much joy we have had in doing this for you I am sure you would realize that we, as the givers, have received our share."

Aunt Mercy kept Judy's hand clasped in her own. "It is all exactly as we talked it out, and you remembered. Isn't that pretty to think you remembered everything, but it's too much, too much for a plain old body like me."

"It isn't, Aunt Mercy, it isn't," came from one and another. "We are just as proud of it as we can be," spoke up Kitty, "and we do hope you like it."

"Like it? Why, seems though crowned heads couldn't have finer. I am afraid I shall be so sot up that I'll be above speaking to Sukey."

"Now you sit here and take it all in," directed Miss Keene, "while the girls go and make some lemonade, then we'll go up-stairs and see what they have been doing there and by that time the others will have come."

The spacious, clean bedroom in its new furbishings was scarcely less of a surprise than the other. "It hasn't looked so since my mother's day," declared

Aunt Mercy. "I don't know as I won't have to call it guest room now, though who'll ever be my guest I can't tell. Time was when we'd entertain the minister or the teacher or maybe a stranger overketched by a storm, but it's been many a long day since anything like that happened."

She was persuaded at last that she must use the room for herself, and when a second relay of young people arrived, they went down-stairs again to bring in the birthday cake and to regale themselves on this and the lemonade that the girls had made.

"Well, I rather guess nobody ever had a finer birthday than this," said Aunt Mercy when all was over. "I don't know as I shall sleep one wink this night and I am mortal afraid I won't be able to do any work outdoor with all this inside to look at. 'Twould be a sort of visitation of the Almighty if I was to be get so sot on my possessions that I couldn't do my rightful work, now wouldn't it?"

"I don't believe you need be afraid of that," Miss Keene comforted her by saying. "You must think of it as rather being a gift from the Almighty to one who has been faithful over few things."

"Well, now you say that I'm willing to believe it is so," returned Aunt Mercy gratefully, and they left her with an exalted look upon her face and thankfulness in her heart.



"It makes one feel like a very worm," Annabel heard Judy saying to Kathleen that night. "To think how many times I have squandered money and brought to myself not one hundredth part of the happiness which this outlay has given that good old woman. I tell you, Kathleen, it is such experiences as this that teach you true values. Never, never, never did I get such returns upon so small an investment."

"It isn't altogether the money part, either," responded Kathleen thoughtfully; "it is because you have given of yourself, too. We have all given of ourselves and have felt the joy of sacrifice. Miss Keene says one really never learns the source of true happiness till she has discovered what sacrifice means."

"I believe that is true," Judy replied. "Well, Thurensera, dear, it has been a happy day and also a valuable one, for it has taught us something. We mustn't let our enthusiasm die out, but must keep Aunt Mercy in our minds when we go away. It is easy enough to do things on the impulse, but it is the steady going that isn't so easy."

"And that is where the sacrifice comes in, perhaps," returned Kathleen. Then they said good-night. Annabel, however, lay awake some time and groped round in her mind half blindly trying to grasp the full meaning of what had been said.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE RESCUE

**I**N spite of her expressed scorn for Miss Blodgett, Annabel had not been slow in offering her services when it came to the matter of helping to renovate the old farmhouse. Her motives were not wholly disinterested, as might be suspected, although she really was ready to follow Judy's lead in most matters. The fact that the boys would be co-workers naturally was the leading cause of her zeal, then she wanted to appear well in the eyes of the other girls, and, lastly, she did not want to be left out when anything was going on which promised excitement. She would have preferred to arouse admiration rather than the good comradeship which existed between the boys and girls, but her little attempts to alter conditions met with not the slightest encouragement and she was obliged to accept matter-of-fact fellowship or be left out altogether. There was no opportunity given for pairing off, and the girl felt that her acquaintance with Fred Furnival was not progressing rapidly.

It was one day when most of the girls had gone off on a hike that she believed her chance had come. She

had pleaded a headache as an excuse to stay in, and Kathleen, who had some important work to do, was quite ready to accept Miss Keene's suggestion to keep Annabel company.

It was very quiet in Minnewawa, only the rustle of the leaves, the infrequent call of a bird, the chattering of a squirrel and the splash of the water disturbed the stillness. Annabel had said that she would be better off if she could be left alone, so Kathleen had absorbed herself in her work and had not ventured even to peep into the room at the other end of the lodge where the curtain was drawn. At last she felt that a little exercise of some kind would not come amiss since she had been sitting still so long. Perhaps Annabel would like a cup of fresh water. Kathleen decided that she would go to the spring for some. She started off with her bucket, and on her return looked in at the opening on the other side of the shack to see if Annabel were awake. No Annabel was there, although her cot showed that she had recently been lying down.

Kathleen sat down to wait. "She will probably be back in a minute," she told herself, but the moments passed and no Annabel appeared. "I will go up to the Wigwam; perhaps she was tired of lying down and is sitting on the porch," said Kathleen to herself. At the Wigwam not a soul was seen except a pert little wren that was hopping along the porch and who flew off at



did not seem to be getting ahead very fast, then suddenly the truth dawned upon her: Annabel! She was going over to the boys' camp. For a moment Kathleen stood irresolute. Should she take another canoe and go out to her and thus save her from seeming to have openly broken through camp discipline, or should she go and report to the councilors on the grounds? Kathleen realized that she was not very well trained herself in water sports, and, moreover, would likewise be breaking rules if she ventured forth alone. What should she do? She went out to the end of the wharf and then to the end of the spring-board that she might see exactly what was going on. In a moment more she felt sure that the girl in the canoe was getting into difficulties. There! she was sure of it! She had lost her paddle. Now she was trying to recover it from the water. "Take care," whispered Kathleen, "you'll be overboard in a minute."

The words were scarcely uttered when overboard the girl went and in a second was floundering about in the water. It must be Annabel, who was not an expert swimmer and had now lost her head. Kathleen had never been confident enough, herself, to swim any great distance, but she lost no time in flinging off her shoes and in plunging from the board. Probably Annabel might be able to keep up but she could never swim ashore that distance without help. Without thought

of whether she could do so much herself, Kathleen struck out. She had not yet learned to undress in deep water, and indeed did not think of doing so, yet she realized that, weighted with her clothing, she could not make as good headway as when dressed in her bathing suit. However she kept bravely on, praying that her strength might not fail her. Once or twice she shouted to the girl beyond, not at all sure that she would be heard. The canoe was drifting toward her; if she could reach that and secure the paddle perhaps she would be able to clamber in and so save her strength.

Caught by a light wind the canoe swung off down the lake, and Kathleen saw this hope go. She felt her strength giving out. How was it with the other? Lifting her head she looked to see that Annabel was still afloat. "I pray that I can reach her," whispered Kathleen. Then she shouted with all her strength: "Don't give up, Annabel. I'm coming." For a moment she allowed herself to float that she might gather up fresh strength, the thought coming to her: "We shall have to get back. This is not all. We shall have to get back."

Almost exhausted at last she reached Annabel who gasped out: "Oh, I shall drown! I know I shall drown."

"Then we'll do it together," panted Kathleen.

"We can never get back," Annabel said.

"Maybe not," Kathleen was able to say, "but we can try our best." She felt it was a forlorn hope, but she knew it was worth all her effort. "If you feel yourself going don't grab me round the neck," she advised. "Put your hands on my shoulders and I will do my uttermost, but try to keep up as long as you can."

They struck out valiantly, but little by little Kathleen felt her power waning, and told herself the end was near when Annabel gave up, whispering faintly: "I can't do another stroke."

"Float," ordered Kathleen.

Just at this moment came a shout from the shore just above the camp and presently a rowboat shot through the water toward them. "Don't give up! Don't give up!" came the cry. "Keep afloat if you can!"

Ceasing their strokes the girls gave themselves up to barely keeping their heads above water, and in an incredibly short space of time the boat was close to them. Kathleen was able to climb in, but Annabel had collapsed utterly and had to be lifted aboard. When she was safe Kathleen recognized their rescuer. "It's the hermit, Sam Perry," she exclaimed.

"That's just who," replied the man with a half smile. "What I want to know is what you two were doing out there in the middle of the lake by yourselves."

"Why we—at least the paddle got lost and the canoe overturned when—when the attempt was made to get hold of the paddle and so, and so," Kathleen stammered, glancing at Annabel who sat silent and shivering.

"You needn't explain," interrupted the man. "I was just wondering what you would say. I saw the whole business from shore. At first I thought it was some of your camp doings, that you were doing it on purpose. More than once I've been fooled by your tricks like that, but after I had watched for a while I came to the conclusion it was serious business and that you were in real trouble, so I put off as quick as I could."

"I think you have saved our lives," said Kathleen unsteadily. "I am not a crack swimmer, neither is my friend here, and I don't know that we could ever have reached shore."

The man looked at her silently for a moment. "I guess if I had the luck of saving your life you saved hers. You went out alone and were bringing her back. How does it happen that you two had it all your own way? Why weren't some of the others on hand? It isn't right for girls to go off like that with no one by to watch them. It's a wonder, too, why none of those boys saw you, those boys over at that camp yonder."



"If they did see us they must have thought just as you did, that we were practising and that it was one of our stunts."

The man gave a grunt and bent himself to the oars more steadily. Annabel sat miserably silent. Kathleen watched the rapid nearing of the shore. Presently she turned to the man and said: "We were sorry to find that we had driven you away from your camping ground."

He gave his grim smile. "So you were there again. I surmised you'd be."

"And that is why you went away? It was too bad that we intruded upon you. We will not do it again if we happen to stumble upon your tent."

"A girl that's got the grit you have I'll always be glad to see, but ——" he gave a significant glance in Annabel's direction and shook his head. "You going to tell on her?" he whispered.

"Are you?" Kathleen returned.

He smiled one-sidedly. "None of my business. I'll leave it to you to get her out of the mess."

Kathleen smiled. She wondered just how she could get Annabel out of "the mess," how much she should keep to herself and how much reveal. She did not have time to decide just then for they were at the wharf.

"Get off those wet clothes," advised Sam Perry,

"and take a drink of hot milk or ginger tea or something, and do it right away."

"I wish I knew how to thank you," said Kathleen holding out her hand.

The man gave it a hearty clasp. "Some of these days, if chance comes, I'll tell you how I got paid for the job, but I guess all I will say now is that I'm mighty glad I happened to be on hand, and that you don't owe me anything, not a thing, not even thanks." He paid not the slightest heed to Annabel, but waved his hand and pushed off without another word.

Annabel made her way as swiftly as she could up the hill to Minnewawa, Kathleen following and puzzling over the hermit's words. He was surely a queer somebody.

Arrived at Minnewawa she had Annabel in bed in a jiffy. "As soon as I get into some dry clothes I'll go up to the Wigwam for some hot milk," she said as she tucked a blanket over Annabel who was still shivering.

Annabel began to cry weakly. "You saved me, you saved me," she sobbed. "I should never have had the grit to keep up if you hadn't come to me. I didn't want to die, Kathleen. What can I ever do for you?"

"What in the world did you ever go off away out there for?" asked Kathleen choosing to ignore heroics.

"I—I—oh, Kathleen, you will despise me, I know, but I thought it wouldn't be any harm just to go over to the boys' camp. I thought perhaps some one would ask me to go rowing or would paddle me back to our camp. I didn't mean any harm, I really didn't."

Kathleen, though quite disgusted, said not a word, and Annabel continued weeping.

Presently Annabel lifted her head and caught Kathleen's hand. "Are you going to tell?" she asked. "Are you, Kathleen?"

"Did you never hear the saying that a thing you would not have known, you should not do? It was silly, awfully silly, and besides you knew you were breaking rules."

"I am sure I have been punished for it," returned Annabel. "Are you going to tell?"

"I don't know," said Kathleen, and with that she left the room to get the hot milk.

An hour later the girls came trooping back. "Isn't Annabel any better?" inquired Judy as she peeped in upon the girl in bed and saw Kathleen, too, sitting there. "You look as if you had been drawn through a knot-hole yourself," she added, scrutinizing her friend. "I will venture to say you have been poring over some old anatomy or something the entire afternoon and haven't been out of this room."

Kathleen smiled and glanced at Annabel who bur-

rowed her head closer in her pillow. "Oh, yes, I have been out," she returned, "but I am rather done up, I have to confess."

Suddenly Annabel sat up in bed. "Tell her," she cried. "Tell her. She will find out some day. Everybody will. That old idiot of a hermit isn't going to keep it to himself. I was a silly to think so. Tell her."

Judy looked from one to the other in amazement. "Is she delirious?" she asked Kathleen in a low voice. "Hadn't we better tell Miss Keene so she can telephone for a doctor?"

Kathleen shook her head. "I think she is all right," she said, "but we have had an adventure, and it has shaken us up a bit."

"An adventure and I not here? With the hermit, was it?"

"He had a part in it," Kathleen told her. "You see Annabel was out practising with a canoe and lost a paddle. She tried to get it and fell overboard, then I went out to help her and the hermit saw us from the shore and came out in his rowboat and brought us in."

"That isn't half of it." Annabel sat up in bed and fiercely brushed the hair from her eyes. "She isn't telling half. She was wonderful, wonderful, and if it hadn't been for her I should be dead this minute."

She dropped her face shudderingly in her hands while Judy cast a look of apprehension at Kathleen.

"Maybe not," Kathleen interposed. "Perhaps Mr. Perry would have gone to you even if I had not."

"No, he would not, for he wasn't there till afterward. She did it, Judy. She swam out while I was floundering in the water and she encouraged me when I was about to give up, and was taking me in when he reached us."

"How far out were you?" inquired Judy, her voice a-tremble.

"About the middle of the lake, between here and the opposite shore."

Judy threw her arms around Kathleen. "And you were making light of it. You never swam so far, and you were doing it alone. Oh, Kathleen, where was everybody, and how did it happen that Annabel was so far away by herself?"

"I went out alone, I tell you," said Annabel defiantly. "I wanted to go. I never can do anything or go anywhere without a whole crowd tagging along. I wanted to go by myself for once."

"Then you didn't have a headache at all, and just made up the whole thing so you could run after those boys at camp and you took this time when you thought you could sneak off and back again without being found out. It serves you right, but oh, Kath-

leen, if I had lost you I could never have forgiven her, never."

Annabel flung herself on the bed in another wild fit of weeping. "I wish I had drowned, I do, I do. Nobody loves me. You are all down on me because I want to have a little fun once in a while. I wish I had never come here. I don't want to be a Camp Fire Girl and I want my mother."

Judy, immediately feeling remorseful, went over to sit on the side of the bed and try to soothe the unhappy child. "Of course we love you, Annabel. Do you suppose if Kathleen hadn't cared for you she would have risked her life for you?"

"Maybe she cares, but you don't."

"Of course I care. I think we shall have to tell Miss Keene about this, but we need not tell another soul, need we, Kathleen?"

"I certainly shall not and you can be assured, Annabel, that Mr. Perry will not; he said he would not."

"Oh, Kathleen, did he?" Annabel dropped her head on Kathleen's shoulder. "You are so dear, so dear. Do you think I am very, very wicked?"

"I don't think you are wicked, but only foolish, and full of romantic ideas that are not a bit like real life. If you would only make up your mind to be a jolly, sensible girl you would have ever so much better times."

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"I might be jolly, but I don't believe I could ever be sensible," answered Annabel sadly.

"You could make a try at it, anyway," put in Judy. "You could stop expecting every boy you see to blossom into a panoplied knight, and you could stop sighing to the moon and doing sly little tricks because you want to make yourself into the heroine of a cheap novel. The real heroes and heroines don't study the part as you do, and they are so without knowing it. In this very thing that has happened to-day who turned out to be the heroine, Kathleen, who did her noblest unconsciously, or you who tried to make a moving picture of yourself?"

"Oh, Judy, don't," protested Kathleen.

Annabel, however, only sighed, but drew closer to Kathleen. She recognized the truth of Judy's saying however hard it might be.

"I'm going up to help with the tables," said Judy suddenly, "and you've got to let me, Kathleen. You are in no fit state to do it, and if you don't want any questions asked you'd better stay here."

Agreeing to the truth of this Kathleen stayed and Judy went off to take her place. Annabel cuddled closer. "You are a heroine, Kathleen," she said. "I wish you would tell me what I can do for you."

Kathleen smoothed back the rumpled locks from the flushed face and smiled down at the girl. Somehow

her heart yearned as never before over this wayward girl. "Please don't think of me as a heroine, Annabel," she said, "but just as a good, faithful friend. If you want to do anything for me you can do this, just come and tell me whenever you feel like doing a thing you would not have known, and we will settle it between us. I will be like your big sister."

"But you are only a few months older," objected Annabel.

"But I am ever so much bigger, inches bigger."

"And so much better."

Kathleen laid her hand gently on the other's lips. "Hush, child, that's nonsense. You don't know me," she said.

"I will come to you, then, Kathleen. You understand better than any one else. I shall never never forget what you did to-day, for you tried to shield me, that was almost more to me than the other. I shall love you dearly, Kathleen."



## CHAPTER XII

### A RAINY AFTERNOON

**I**N spite of her exertions and the unwonted excitement Kathleen was no worse for her adventure, though Annabel was still feverish the next day, and was advised by Miss Keene to remain in bed. While not so temperamental nor so nervous as Kathleen she was more uncontrolled and consequently gave the impression of being more affected by unusual conditions.

Judy could not resist the temptation of giving her version of the affair to Miss Keene before Kathleen had her chance. "I wish you had let me tell her first," said the latter somewhat chagrined by Judy's having taken the lead.

"That is just where I was crafty," responded Judy. "I knew you would try to shield her, and would not give yourself credit where credit was due. I told Miss Keene only the exact truth. I gave her a faithful account of what happened as I learned it from you and Annabel."

"What did Miss Keene say?" inquired Kathleen after a silence.

"I don't intend to tell you just now, but will save up for a day when you are grovelling in self-abasement and need encouragement," returned Judy laughing.

"I didn't mean to ask what she said about me," returned Kathleen frowning; "I wanted to know what she said about Annabel."

"Oh, she said that she was afraid she would never be able to win even the rank of Wood Gatherer, and that she would at least have to keep her on probation for some time longer."

"I was afraid of that," replied Kathleen gravely, "but I think she is mistaken about Annabel being able to win her rank. I believe she will. Judy, you and I have got to look out for that child. I know she is silly and frivolous where boys are concerned, but there is something there. She gets glimpses of true things once in a while and I am hoping they will broaden into an extended view some of these days, if we can keep our hold on her."

"Well, I must confess I haven't your faith. After this fiasco I feel ready to wash my hands of her."

"When I look back," said Kathleen thoughtfully, "and consider how little sense I had only a short time ago I am appalled. I was not brought up so indulgently as Annabel, and probably that was what saved me, but if I had been spoiled and had had every

wish gratified, had been made to think everything I said and did was exactly right, and had been given my way right or wrong, I doubt if I would have been any more sensible than Annabel."

"I was, and still am, pretty well spoiled myself," remarked Judy, "but, come now, do you really think I could ever display such a lack of common sense? Annabel has just about enough brains to fill a thimble, no more."

"She hasn't had a chance to develop them. She is very little younger in years, but she certainly is in experience. She has been babied all her life while I have been pushed forward into maturity."

"I should think you had, you poor dear. Well, if you really believe in Annabel I am willing to hang on a while longer, but if she gets into any more scrapes I am done with her."

Kathleen set her lips firmly but said not a word, making up her mind that it would take more than one scrape to cause her to give up Annabel. She was not very promising material to work upon, but through her affections Kathleen hoped she might be won.

From the rest of the girls, as well as from the boys of Camp Winnegen, those in the secret of Annabel's escapade determined the thing should be kept. The boys, to be sure, asked a few questions, for some of them had seen the girls out in the water, but as swim-

ming feats were not an unusual sight, they did not inquire too closely, and were easily put off with evasive or indifferent answers. The drifting canoe and paddle were discovered in a place of safety where they had been left by Sam Perry who brought them in.

As for Sam Perry himself, no one had seen a sign of him. The boys declared that he did not exist and that the girls had made up a tale about him merely to whet their curiosity.

"I might think him a being of my imagination if I had seen him only once," said Kathleen.

"Oh, you didn't tell me you had seen him more than once," returned Fred. "When was the second time?" he asked eagerly.

Kathleen bit her lip, chagrined that she should have come so near to letting the cat out of the bag. "Oh, we saw him in his boat one day when some of us were out in the water," she answered easily.

But here Annabel, who was an expansive young person and moreover did not wish to be left out of the conversation, came in with the remark, "I don't see why you are curious about him. He is not at all an agreeable person."

Kathleen cast her a meaning look and Annabel flushed up. Fred glanced keenly from one to the other. "Why, when did you see him?" he inquired of Annabel.

She shot Kathleen a frightened glance before she stammered, "Why—why, that day—that day out in the water."

"When he was in his boat? Did he talk to you, and how could you tell that he was disagreeable?" Fred questioned sharply.

"He didn't speak to me, but to Kathleen, and of course—and why—oh, I just imagined he could be disagreeable," Annabel slid out of the predicament as best she could.

Fred did not say any more, but he was satisfied that he had not been told the whole story, though he concluded that he would bide his time and some day it would come out.

He and Sig came over one afternoon to ask Judy and Kathleen to go off on a hike with them. "Just us old pals," said Fred. "Don't drag in that silly little Annabel Ladd."

Judy laughed. "Kathleen," she said, "here is Fred calling us genuine things. Do you consider yourself sufficiently flattered to be willing to go off on a tramp through the woods with him and Sig?"

"Sig has just been talking about it," replied Kathleen coming over to where the other two were sitting upon a fallen log by the side of the lake. "I am willing if you are."

"Then we'd better go and tell Miss Keene. She will

not object, of course, but she will want to know where we are."

"Fight shy of Annabel," Fred called after them.

Judy nodded back a reply. "Imagine poor Annabel's feeling if she could have heard that," she said to Kathleen as they trudged off to Miss Keene's tent to report their intentions.

"Poor Annabel indeed," returned Kathleen. "She can't see that boys, straightforward, frank sort of boys like Fred and Sig, would rather be with girls who are just good comrades."

The four started off in fine spirits. It was like old home days to be swinging along together over woodland paths, stopping to identify a tree here, a plant there, a bird's song yonder; chaffing one another, joking, laughing, singing as they went.

They were plunging through a bit of dim cathedral woods when Kathleen remarked: "It seems unusually dark in here. It can't be so very late, can it?"

Fred looked at his watch. "Why, no, not five yet. These dense pine groves are always dark. Perhaps the sun has gone under a cloud."

They plodded on again, but suddenly Judy stopped short. "Hark!" she cried.

"Thunder, as I live," said Sig. "I'll forge ahead and see what it looks like overhead."

The others stood still, listening to the mutterings

which increased in violence till they became actual crashes. Presently Sig came running back. "We're in for it," he cried. "There is no use trying to get back. We'd better stay where we are, it seems to me."

"Perhaps it will not last long, only a passing shower," said Fred cheerfully. "Probably we will find this as good a shelter as there is." He looked up at the towering pines.

They seated themselves under the sheltering trees, whose interlacing boughs made a thick thatch overhead, and awaited the end of the storm. For a time they were quite content. The moss-covered rocks afforded good seats, and the carpet of pine needles was dry to their feet. From time to time one of the boys sauntered to the edge of the grove to look at the sky, coming back with such reports as: "It doesn't look very promising as yet," "Nothing doing, girls," "They're still at it," and such like discouraging statements. Through the trees they could see the black waters of the lake lashed into such waves as they did not think possible. The thunder roared and crashed overhead while vivid lightning pierced the dim recesses of the forest. For a time the four chatted gaily, but as the storm grew fiercer they lapsed into silences which were broken only by a chance remark.

One sharp flash of lightning seemed to have struck a tree not far away, for they could hear it crashing

down in the midst of its fellows. Judy, trying to be brave, quavered out, "That was rather terrible."

"Yes, and the rain is beginning to find its way through our shelter," said Fred wiping the drops from his hand. "This will not do. It is all right for us boys to get wet, but you girls should have a better place."

"We don't mind getting wet," declared Judy, "but it doesn't seem to me quite safe under these tall trees."

"It's this, or the homeward track," remarked Sig.

"Maybe not," Fred rejoined; "I'm going to reconnoitre. It doesn't make any difference if I do get wet. I've had a soaking more than once, and there may be some human habitation beyond these woods."

"That's where you get left," contended Sig. "There is nothing but just woods and woods for miles, until you get to the end of the lake."

"Allee samee I am going to see," and Fred started off.

He turned his steps toward the upper end of the lake, leaving the others to ward off the trickling drops as best they could.

"If we could only find a cave, or a big overhanging rock, to creep under it would be fine," Kathleen remarked as the descending drops became more and more frequent.

"I don't remember any caves," Sig replied. "Fred



and I have done these woods pretty well, though not much beyond this point."

"No cave for me," Judy asserted firmly. "We might find ourselves in a wildcat's den, or even a bear's. I have heard that they have been seen in this vicinity."

"Then we'd better bear the ills we have than fly to those we know not of," returned Kathleen.

They moved their places to a spot where the trees appeared to be a little thicker and settled down to wait Fred's return.

Meanwhile he had taken a direction which he hoped might lead out of the woods, and, after going some distance, was rewarded by the sight of a small clearing where was a log hut and near by a tent whose white outlines first caught his eye. He was not long in making his way to the hut, but his first knock at the door met no response. Not to be discouraged he kept up a continuous thumping and finally the door was opened by a tall, keen-eyed man who frowningly asked him what he wanted.

"Nothing for myself," replied Fred with spirit.

"Then what did you come for?" asked the man with a little wry smile.

"I came to ask shelter for two young ladies who have been overtaken by the storm a little way back. It is too bad a storm for them to venture out in just

yet and they are getting pretty wet. They are Camp Fire Girls and don't mind an ordinary shower, but this is out of the ordinary."

"It is about the worst we've had this year," admitted the man. He was not ready with his consent. "Where did you say those girls are from?" he asked after a moment's pause.

"From Camp Kuequenáku," Fred told him.

The man nodded. "I know. What sort of looking girls are they? One of them tall and blue-eyed with hair the color of chestnuts when the sun is shining on them? The other not so big, but slim and light-haired with a way of casting her eyes around to see who's looking at her?"

Fred laughed. "You've got the first all right, but the other isn't so. The second one is black-haired and gray-eyed."

"Has a way of tossing her head like a race-horse when he's off for home stretch, and looks you straight in the eye. That the one?"

"You have it," Fred acknowledged, now having his suspicions confirmed that this was the hermit.

"Then bring 'em along. I'll start a fire. I couldn't stand that roving-eyed youngster, but these are welcome."

He went in and closed the door, leaving Fred to hurry back chuckling as he went.

He found the three forlornly huddled together. Fred waved them a cheerful signal. "All right-o," he called. "I have found the hermit and he bids you come to his hut. Pretty wet, aren't you?"

"Beginning to be," Judy acknowledged, "though Sig would sit on the most exposed side and tried to protect us all he could."

"You didn't suppose I'd be such a chump as to sit in the middle, did you?" growled Sig, not liking this reference to his chivalry.

"Well, we'll all be sitting before a good fire in a few minutes," Fred assured them. "Come along, all of you. The old fellow had Kathleen and Judy down fine, but was dead set against the girl with the roving eye. Isn't that a good one on Annabel? What puzzles me is how he had it all so pat. When and where has he seen Annabel?"

"Who can tell when and where he has seen any of us?" said Judy airily. "A silent, queer creature like that may be lurking around when we least suspect."

"Oh, I don't believe he would spy on us," declared Kathleen in defense.

"He might not exactly spy," confessed Judy, "but he might see us sometimes when we were not thinking of him, in the village or on the road."

"How did you happen to find him, Fred?" Sig inquired.

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"The merest chance. I caught sight of his tent as I was making for the edge of the woods where I hoped to find some sort of road that might lead to a farmhouse."

"Well, I call it great good luck," Sig acknowledged emphatically.

They made their way through the piece of woods with little difficulty as Fred had discovered the path, and presently were at the door of the hut which was opened promptly to their knock.

"Well, Mr. Perry," began Judy, "you didn't expect us to call upon you to-day, I know. Don't you feel flattered that we should have come in all this storm?"

The man smiled down at her while his eyes twinkled. "I didn't think you'd find me out in any weather, but women folks are mighty persistent," he retorted. "However, as long as you're here you may as well come in out of the rain." He opened the door wide and they entered the one room of the cabin, a comfortable enough place, if rude in its appointments. There was a lordly fireplace in which crackled a newly built fire. A bunk on one side the room, a rough table, a bench by the fire, a chair made of a barrel and covered with skins, a set of shelves constituted about all the furniture. Various cooking utensils hung around the fireplace, a row of books upon a shelf near the window and a lamp

on a small stand gave evidence of how winter days and evenings were spent.

"What a nice cozy place," said Kathleen looking curiously around.

"Glad you like it," returned Sam Perry. "I live in my tent mostly in summer time, and sleep there in winter except in the worst weather, but there are worse places than a log cabin. Tent I can move about to any place I choose, though I never go very far afield." He addressed himself entirely to Kathleen, paying little attention to the others. "You are no worse for your ducking?" he said after a survey of her.

Kathleen flushed up. "Oh, no," she answered. "I am quite used to the water now, and I adore swimming. I can really dive without a qualm, though I didn't think in the beginning that I should ever accomplish it."

"And that other one, she all right? I thought one time it was going to be a close shave for her."

"She is quite well." Kathleen gave the assurance hurriedly and then changed the subject. "Tell us about your pets, Mr. Perry. The boys would like to hear. You must know our names." She made them all known to him as they seated themselves around the fire.

"My pets?" The man was ready to discourse upon them. "I don't keep anything caged up. My birds

are free to come and go, but they are tame enough to eat from my hand. As for the other wild things, I try to make them understand that I am no enemy. If I find a wounded creature I do my best for it; if it dies I don't feel conscience stricken if I take the skin for my own use. Anything you may see in here has come to me that way. I never killed a beast in my life, not even for food. Fish, yes, I do go fishing, but I eat precious little meat. There is a farm about here where I can get all the milk and eggs I want; butter, too, and bread once in a while, though I generally bake my own."

The boys listened interestedly. This was the free life truly, yet they wondered how the man could endure the solitude. "Don't you ever get lonely?" Sig asked.

"Yes, but I surmise that everybody gets lonely, no matter where they are. As I was telling these young ladies one day, I have been more lonely in cities than ever I have been here." He arose from the bench where he had been sitting and went to the window. "Don't seem to be slackening up a mite," he observed. "I rather guess it is about your supper time; I know it's mine. I can't give you very tony fare but I can give you a cup of tea, a shortcake and some fried eggs, if that will stay you."

Every one began to protest, but not paying the

slightest attention to them the man commenced his preparations. "Guess we'll have to have birch bark plates," he remarked, "and take turns with the tea. I haven't but two cups."

"Oh, the birch bark will be lovely," cried Judy, "and we always carry our own cups when we start off for a walk." She produced the cup swinging from her belt, and the others did the same.

"I wish you would let me help you," said Kathleen as she saw him bring forth a pan of flour.

"Good cook?" he asked quizzically.

"Pretty good," was the reply.

"So am I," came the assertion without a pause in the act of making the shortcake. This was presently patted upon a board and placed before the fire. The water, boiled in a kettle swinging from a crane, was soon ready for the tea, and the eggs, fried in a long-handled skillet, were done to a turn when the shortcake was baked. Then they all sat round the big table, and soon became so merry that the meal was anything but a formal one. Praise for the quality of the food, for the cook and for the manner of serving was passed over by their entertainer with never a comment, only his wry smile once in a while broke the gravity of his face.

"For uninvited guests it seems to me that we have fared mighty well," declared Judy when the last scrap

of shortcake had disappeared. "Do you often entertain strangers, Mr. Perry?"

"Don't remember that I ever did before."

"And you wouldn't have done so this time if we had not forced ourselves upon you," she returned saucily.

The man was silent for a moment before he said, "I told your friend here," he indicated Fred, "just as soon as I knew who you were that you would be welcome. I owe a good deal to this young lady." He waved his hand toward Kathleen.

"No, no," protested she. "How can you say that, Mr. Perry? The obligation is all on my side."

He shook his head. "What did I tell you that day when I brought you and Miss Flibbertygibbet back to land in my boat? Didn't I tell you then that I would tell you some day how I was paid for the job?"

"And is this the some day?" asked Kathleen in a low voice.

"It may as well be. It's just this way. When a man has lost all faith in womankind, doesn't think that there's one worth shucks, believes they are a selfish and vain, faithless set with no hearts and less brains, and he suddenly comes across one who takes her life in her hands and without a thought for herself flings herself into the water to save another, that I misdoubt isn't much worth saving, he gets a new light on the question, and when, added to the rest, instead of want-



ing it known that she has done this thing the girl tries to screen the other from fault, why then I say I'm ready to put my faith in women again after a good many years."

There was complete silence after this outbreak, but presently it was broken by Fred. "So that was how it was. I wondered," he said.

"That is exactly how it was," said Mr. Perry.

"But you promised not to tell," said Kathleen tremulously.

"Did I? It doesn't seem to me I did. I said it was none of my business and that I'd leave it to you to get her out of the scrape. I take it for granted you did."

"She did," Judy spoke up. "No one but myself and Miss Keene have known anything about it."

"And now you have told the boys," said Kathleen reproachfully.

Mr. Perry gave his grim smile. "There's some things boys had better know than not, and this is one of them," he said inscrutably as it appeared to the girls, "but I'll venture to say they'll keep it to themselves if you ask them to."

"We will," promised the boys with one accord.

"It has stopped raining," said Kathleen springing up, "and as we can burn up the dishes instead of washing them, I think we need not wait any longer before starting for camp."

"Hold on a minute," said Mr. Perry, "I can take you there in my boat; it will be dryer going that way. There is a short cut we can take that will get you to the lake in half the time."

To their surprise a curve in the shore brought the lake much nearer than they had thought and in a few minutes they were on their way. The boys insisted upon taking the oars since Mr. Perry would have to row back, and he permitted this, saying he had never been anything but a working passenger on this boat and rather enjoyed being idle.

The moon was struggling through great wracks of clouds and the stars were peeping out as they crossed the lake. The girls were landed first, Mr. Perry offering to take the boys across before going to his cabin, but their own canoe was at hand and they declined his offices.

"We've had a lovely time," said Kathleen, "but," she added softly, as she shook hands with their entertainer, "I wish ——"

"You wish I had kept my mouth shut," he interrupted her by saying.

"Not exactly that," she answered, "but I wish you had made a little less of my part in the matter. It made me feel so silly before those boys to be perched up on a pedestal where I don't belong."

"It won't hurt you or them if you don't make up

your mind to live up there permanently," rejoined the man. "You might come down once in a while, but you'd better continue to occupy a high place than to fall off into the dust and mud and be despised for it. Good-night and come again. I like your crowd." He pushed off from shore and Kathleen joined Judy who was making her farewells to the boys.

## CHAPTER XIII

### UP THE MOUNTAIN

THE girls were all gathered in the Wigwam when the wanderers returned. Annabel flung herself joyously upon Kathleen crying, "Oh, you are here! you are here! I thought you had been struck by lightning!"

Kitty Acker dragged her away. "You are as bad as a stroke of lightning yourself," she declared. "Don't smother her, Annabel. Give her a chance to breathe and tell us where those two have been."

Molly Ludlow was feeling Judy's clothing. "Dry as a bone, as I live," she exclaimed. "Give an account of yourselves. Here we have all been worrying ourselves ill and you come in as placidly as if you had been sitting in a brick oven all this while."

"Yes, do tell us where you have been," exclaimed the others who were crowding around.

"Will you have the tale in prose or will you wait till Kathleen can do it in verse?" said Judy teasingly.

Kitty gave her a soft dab on each cheek. "You deserve to have your ears boxed," she said. "How can

you even suggest keeping us any longer in suspense after the throes of agony we have been in?"

Kathleen and Judy went over to Miss Keene who was sitting by the fire. She took a hand of each and looked up smiling. "Give an account of yourselves," she said, "but first tell me if you are all sound; we see that you are safe."

"Right as a trivet," Judy responded. "We were pretty wet some hours ago, but we had a chance of drying off. Such an adventure as we have had."

"You are always having adventures," pouted Kitty trying to look cross which, with her little saucy nose and dimples, it was hard for her to do.

"Yes, why don't we have adventures?" Evelyn put in.

"Nobody has more adventures than you, Evelyn dear," remarked Molly. "You never get through a day without rolling down-hill or breaking up family china or knocking somebody down."

"I'm sure I don't do it on purpose," contended Evelyn.

"Sh! Sh! Sh! Stop your quarreling, children," cried Miss Keene. "Let Judy and Kathleen have the floor."

"Well," began Judy seating herself on the floor in front of the fire, "we have been visiting the hermit."

"No! Really? Where did you find him? Judy,

you are making that up out of whole cloth," came from various parts of the circle.

"Truly we have," declared Judy and then she launched forth into an account of their experiences, ending up with, "but it is Kathleen who has taken him by storm, literally and actually. He has a great case on her."

"Now Judy," protested Kathleen, "I am sure he was just as nice to you and the boys and he said he liked the crowd."

"Well, I insist that you have made a conquest," laughed Judy. "The old fellow appears rather crusty at first sight, but you never knew any one so hospitable once you dig under the crust."

"Weren't you scared stiff out there in those woods with that rattle bang thunder and that sharp lightning all around?" inquired Evelyn. "I believe I should have been paralyzed with fright."

"You would have no need to be," suggested Molly who loved to tease Evelyn, "for it would take more than lightning to penetrate all that adipose tissue."

Evelyn drew a long sigh. "As if it were not a trial enough for me to be so fat but I must endure being teased about it," she mourned.

Molly put an arm caressingly around her. "Never mind, Evy," she tried to undo the effect of her speech, "you are a darling, and if I were as universally be-

loved as you are I shouldn't care how many pounds I weighed."

"What a nice mollyfying speech," observed Kitty. Then several fell upon her and pommelled her for making such a pun, till she cried for mercy.

"Here! here!" Miss Keene rapped her chair for attention. "Now that we have heard such a good account of an adventure suppose we announce our plan."

"Oh, yes, girls," Kitty, the talkative, began, "we were just getting excited over it when you two came in. We ——"

She was stopped short by Molly. "Can't you let Miss Keene tell about it, you hyphenated babbling brook?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Keene," Kitty apologized and subsided.

"We were speaking of a walking trip to the White Mountains," Miss Keene began. "Mr. Wheeler, the Scout Master at Camp Winnegen, was over here and said he intended taking a party of his boys up the mountains next week, so, as he proposed that we join forces, it is decided that a certain number of the girls of our camp shall go along. It is a singularly good opportunity, for Mr. Wheeler knows all the paths, and the various routes. He is a good mountain climber and a wonderfully efficient guide. Two of our older councilors, Miss Armitage and Mrs. Gray, will go and about

half a dozen of the girls. Now, how about you, Judy and Kathleen, would you like to join the party?"

"I'd simply love it," replied Judy. "Wouldn't you, Kathleen?"

Kathleen would, but she was doubtful about the expense of such a trip. "Would it cost much?" she inquired before she gave an answer.

"About ten dollars, if you go part way by automobile and are obliged to stop overnight at a hotel anywhere," Miss Keene told her. "Mr. Wheeler seemed to think that might be advisable unless each member of the party were equally strong, and if the weather should happen to be stormy. It may cost less, but I think it would be best to calculate on that amount. Miss Armitage and two of the girls have decided upon the automobile, but I think the others believe they can walk the entire distance."

"I am sure I could," Kathleen responded hopefully.

"And we may not have any hotel bill at all," Kitty came in. "Do go, Kathleen. Mr. Wheeler knows of a farmer who often lets tramps like us use his barn to sleep in, charging only a very little, and most of the boys say they want to go there. I believe there are two rooms, lofts or something. Of course if the weather is good we can sleep out in the open."

"If that is the way of it, then I come in with the rest of you," decided Kathleen. "What about food?"



"Some of the supplies can go in the automobile," Miss Keene told her, "some you can carry yourselves, and some can be procured along the way."

"Hurrah!" cried Kitty. "I wish I had a hat to toss up. I feel so good spirited. Let's have a dance to express our emotions. The Ox dance about suits the occasion. Come on, girls." The others arose with alacrity and soon were giving vent to their enthusiasm in the uncouth, but interesting, folk dance.

"What an exciting day it has been," exclaimed Judy as the Minnewawans were on their way to their lodge.

"Yes, for some," sighed Annabel, "but it has been one of anxiety and disappointment for me. Why were you all so unkind as to go off on that walk without asking me when you knew it would have been a heavenly boon to me?"

"Well, you see you weren't anywhere round when we started," Judy explained lamely.

"I was so grieved and distressed when I learned that you had gone and in such company."

"Annabel, I could shake you," cried Judy. "You are too silly and sentimental for words. Such company, as you call it, did not even inquire after you and certainly didn't suggest that you should go along. Haven't you any pride? Do you want to go where you are not invited?" Judy was out of patience.

"I would have been invited," persisted Annabel, "if you had cared enough about me to do it."

"Well, if you must know, the boys didn't want any one but their old pals. We have known them for years and years and when we are with them it is just good comradeship all around, so that is why they like to be with us."

"You say that because you are jealous," asserted Annabel.

Judy was too angry to trust herself to speak so she flounced off to join Kathleen walking behind her with Evelyn.

"If I have to stand that callow, brainless little creature much longer, I shall lose my mind," she declared. "Evelyn, do please go on with her and take her off my hands while I ease my temper to Kath. She doesn't pour forth her wishy-washy sentiment to you, I know. I suppose she is watering her footsteps now with tear-drops because I scolded her."

Evelyn, always ready to oblige, went ahead to walk with Annabel while Judy unburdened herself to Kathleen. "I vote we drop her when we get back to town," she ended by saying.

"I don't believe that will be very easy," Kathleen returned. "To tell you the truth, I believe it doesn't make much difference who is the object of her devotion, so long as she has the object. First it was you then

it was Fred, and now, I am regretful to say, I think it is I even more than Fred, and she is consumed with jealousy all around. She wants to be It with all of us and can't see why she isn't."

"So much the worse. Well, all is, if she goes on that trip to the White Mountains I shall not."

"She isn't going."

"How do you know?"

"She told me that Miss Keene thought it would be too much for her. She isn't so tremendously strong, you know, and Miss Keene promised Mrs. Ladd that she would use her judgment and would not let Anna-bel undertake anything beyond her strength; that was one reason why she was so done up after that affair in the water when I was not."

"Well, of course, if she isn't strong," Judy was somewhat appeased, "one can't be too hard on her, but she certainly has the faculty of making me lose my temper more than any one I ever knew."

"Having a temper that is rather easily lost," replied Kathleen slyly.

"I wish I could lose it forever and never find it," responded Judy good-naturedly. "I think that is a stupid expression anyway. We don't lose our tempers; we lose control of them. You certainly have yours well in hand, Kath."

"If you had lived with Aunt Susan Wyatt and

Uncle James as long as I have done, you would have yours in hand, too. They certainly were great restrainers of temper. I did give vent to my spleen once in a while, but I was so rigidly handled that I didn't dare do it often." They had arrived at Minnewawa by this time where the lantern of the other two already gleamed out upon the wet paths and dripping boughs.

Irksome as Kathleen was beginning to find Annabel's devotion she was none the less determined to stand by her. It was true that Kathleen was given to idealizing and probably would always believe her friends capable of greater things than others discerned in them, but, for this very reason, they would often rise to her expectations when they would fall below in their relations with those who believed the worst. A lonely orphan girl, sensitive and high-strung, Kathleen had endured a cheerless existence in her aunt's household, and had brooded over her sorrows until she had become a victim of self-pity up to the time when a happy chance threw her in the way of Judy Falkner and the Camp Fire Girls, who became a revelation to her. With this recollection always in her mind she was capable of a keener sympathy for less happy persons than was Judy, herself an indulged only child. To Judy, to whom Kathleen owed so much, she gave her deepest affection, and yet that night she lay awake

wondering if it were not her higher duty to stay at camp with Annabel rather than go on the mountain trip with Judy and the rest. She was quite sure that she did not want to make the sacrifice and was not at all sure but that she owed it to Judy to go, yet with Annabel, who had come to depend more upon her than upon Judy, she half determined she should stay. She fell asleep before she had fully made up her mind, yet it was the first question which met her in the morning.

Judy, noticing her abstraction, asked, "What is it, Kath? Better tell your old sister Judy and get it out of your system."

"It is about Annabel," responded Kathleen after a little hesitation.

"Annabel! That girl will be the death of me. Why didn't her mother take her to California? That would have been just about as far as I should like to see her go."

"Well, she isn't going to the White Mountains, much as she wants to, and I am wondering if I shouldn't stay here to keep her company. It seems pretty hard that ——"

But Judy broke in with, "Are you crazy? Do you suppose for one minute that she would do as much for you?"

"She might, but that hasn't anything to do with it. We aren't supposed to be playing a game of give and take."

"She won't thank you. She will take it as her right. She won't appreciate the sacrifice."

"I believe she would."

"Oh, Kath, your geese are always swans. What about me? Aren't you going to consider me? It will spoil my whole trip if you don't go."

"That is just the point that is troubling me. I want to consider you above any one else, but at the same time I realize that your character is built upon finer lines than Annabel's, and that for the sake of the best good you could give in more nobly than she could."

"If you don't go neither will I," was Judy's reply. "I reckon I am just as capable of making sacrifices as you are. If I don't go this year I can another, besides I have been to the White Mountains with my parents and you have never been. That settles it, Kath. You stay, I stay; I go, you go."

"I want to go the very worst way," confessed Kathleen. There might be no next year for her, she realized, especially if that plan of going to Florida should come about.

"Then I say go. The greatest good to the greatest number, should be the motto."

Kathleen said no more at that time, but decided to think the matter over still longer and await a possible turn of events which might help to settle the question.

Nothing, however, did develop, and finally she made up her mind to sound Annabel upon the subject. Her way of looking at it might make all the difference in the world.

The two were sitting alone in Minnewawa, busily engaged in darning their stockings when Kathleen broached the subject. "Annabel," she began, "wouldn't you like to have me stay with you while the others go to the White Mountains? I could sleep in here in Judy's place, you know, and you wouldn't be so lonesome."

Annabel stared at her for a moment before she said: "Do you mean to say you would stay here on my account?"

"Why not?"

"Because it would be perfectly dreadful. After all you have done for me do you suppose I would allow you to give up that trip? I want you to go. I should be miserable if I thought you were staying because of me."

Kathleen laid down her stocking to lean over and kiss Annabel. "I believe I am gladder that you want me to go than I am to go," she said, which cryptic remark Annabel did not quite understand though she did appreciate the fact that Kathleen approved of her and that meant much.

Kathleen promptly reported the conversation to

Judy receiving the comment that Annabel had more sense than one might suppose, and there the incident ended so far as Judy was concerned.

A few days later the mountain party started gaily forth. The automobile carrying ponchos, certain supplies and several of the company was to follow and overtake the others at a certain point. Fred and Sig were among the boys; Kathleen, Judy, Molly and Kitty among the girls. Those left behind went to the top of the hill to wave their farewells. At the last moment Kathleen ran back to say to Evelyn, "Please be nice to Annabel."

Evelyn nodded. "I will," she promised. To be sure she was always nice to every one, but this meant that she would be specially so, and Kathleen went off satisfied that though Annabel might miss Judy and herself, Evelyn would see to it that she was not neglected.

Annabel had already started off down the hill, unable to keep back the tears, but determined that Kathleen, at least, should not see them. She rarely had had to face a harder trial. To see those she cared most for starting off on a joyous trip in which she had no part meant such disappointment as seemed for the moment a real sorrow.

Evelyn managed to overtake her before she reached the foot of the hill. "Well, pard," she began, "you



and I will have to keep up Minnewawa's reputation all by our loneys, but I reckon we can do it. Did you hear what Miss Keene said?"

"About what?" inquired Annabel turning her head that Evelyn might not see her wiping her eyes.

"She says the stay-at-homes shall have a good time too. We are to have all the left-behind boys over for a frolic some evening. They want to learn some folk dances and we want to teach them, then we are to go on a picnic, boys and all, some day, and I haven't a doubt but the Winnegeners will return the compliment. How's that for high old times?"

Annabel's tears were quite dried by now. It appeared there might be compensations in remaining behind. "It sounds awfully jolly," she admitted. "When is the picnic to be?"

"Don't believe it is quite decided, but we are to take the motor boat and perhaps one of the canoes and go as far as we can get till we find a good camping ground for the day, then we can play games or do some water stunts and all that. There is a talk of having charades or a little play of some sort the evening the boys come over here."

It all sounded quite exciting and Annabel's spirits rose to the prospects. It would not be so dull after all, and if one could not have pudding one could enjoy pie, especially if it were of such quality as suited one's

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taste. Evelyn was a pleasant sort of somebody whose mental calibre was not much above her own and they would get along very well together, Annabel reflected. So arm in arm they proceeded down the hill, each rather surprised at finding the other so companionable. If Kathleen had but known it she could have made no better move than to leave Annabel in Evelyn's hands.

## CHAPTER XIV

### KETTLE AND CATTLE

**M**EANTIME the jolly party travelled on joyously together. By noon the automobile overtook them and they had their first wayside meal. A good one it was: canned soup, sandwiches, fruit and gingerbread, with iced lemonade brought in a huge can by the automobile.

"This is probably our last treat of this kind," announced Mr. Wheeler, "for we shall have to depend upon foraging for our liquid diet, milk when it is possible, water when it is not."

After their midday rest they started on again. Mrs. Gray exchanged places with one of the girls, at least she gave up her seat in the automobile to walk with the pedestrians. Every twenty minutes Mr. Wheeler called a halt. "Three minutes of rest," was the order. "In this way," declared their guide, "one can go twice as far without great fatigue. That is something I want you all to remember," and indeed they found this to be a fact. Every now and then some one started up a song which brought out wondering listeners from the lonely farmhouses along the way, as all joined in.

"I feel like a Canterbury Pilgrim," remarked Kathleen.

"I think this is much better," declared Judy. "We should give ourselves a name."

"Why not The Joyous Jaunters?" proposed Fred.

"Fine," agreed Judy, "so nice and alliterative. Pass it along, Fred." So the name was taken up and Kathleen suggested that their "count" be called "The Joyous Jaunt."

"We must make up some songs, too," Kitty said. "We'll make verses as they happen to come to any one, and write them down at the halts."

"We'll have to settle on a metre first," Fred responded.

"What's the matter with different songs in different metres?" said Sig. "The Muse may not strike us all at the same angle."

"Nothing the matter with that," Fred agreed. "First fellow that can reel off a good one just let him sing it out."

No one would have suspected Sig of having musical or verse making powers, yet he was the first to troll out an air to the tune of "America."

"All joyous jaunters we,  
Happy and glad and free  
As we march on.  
We're not so extra wise,

Yet we don't mind the flies,  
Nor the sun in our eyes  
As we climb on."

Then the girls took up the tale:

"Judy's a bossy kid,  
When she said 'Do' we did  
Though we cried 'No!'  
Molly can laugh and eat.  
Kitty's nose is too sweet,  
Councilors can't be beat  
Where'er you go."

This gave the boys their chance and they put their heads together to achieve the next.

"Billy's a sprightly kid ;  
Harvey can dance a jig ;  
Sig can do rhymes ;  
Wheeler's a fine S. M.  
Fred makes a private mem.  
That every girl's a gem ;  
We say—sometimes."

The girls could not let this pass and, after whispering and giggling, managed the following retort:

"Betty can monologue ;  
Nan just adores a dog ;  
Kathleen has style.  
Three appetites has each lad ;  
Food seems to be his fad,  
Yet boys are not so bad —  
Once in a while."

"You got back at us, didn't you?" laughed the

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boys. "We'll wave the flag of truce," cried Billy Bodine, fluttering a handkerchief above his head, so they agreed upon a final stanza, a joint composition which went as follows:

"We're making dandy time,  
Though it's a mighty climb  
Up to the top.  
We'll laugh and joke along,  
Singing this very song,  
Then it won't seem so long  
Before we stop."

Next came a brave effort begun ambitiously by Harvey Dean after a lusty singing of "Scots wha hae" by the crowd. Harvey could get no further than the first four lines before he announced, "I'm down and out. Help me put it through, somebody."

"It's a good old tune," declared Sig; "we'd do well to stick to it. Let me think a minute." So presently he came in with the added lines which were needed, and which went so well that one after another contributed to the song till the whole thing was written down during the time of several rests, and was taken up with enthusiasm, being sung vehemently and frequently. Here it is:

"Comrades, who are marching on  
To the mount of Washington,  
When the summit we have won  
Cheer for victory !

Cheer for Wheeler, cheer for Gray,  
Winnegen and Muskoday  
All who've cheered us on our way  
As we pounded on.

"Sing we of our good old eats ;  
Of our talents and our feats ;  
Of the buzz-flies and the skeets ;  
Of the roosters proud ;  
Of the piggies in their pens,  
And the nice, good little hens  
Laying eggs by fives and tens  
For this jolly crowd.

"Of the milk we hope to get ;  
Of the lodge we yearn to let ;  
Of the sunshine and the wet ;  
Of the shady tree.  
We are bound to reach our goal,  
Be it fair or be it foul,  
We will get there, ev'ry soul ;  
Joyous Jaunters we."

Of course the boys could not resist Tipperary, so a third song was made, the chorus of which was a great favorite, and every little while some one was liable to burst out with :

"It's a long, long way to the mountain ;  
It's a long way to go ;  
It's a long, long way to the mountain,  
And the highest point we know ;  
Good-bye Winnegen Camp, and Kuequenáku  
fair ;  
It's a long, long way to the mountain,  
But we shall get there."

The first night they camped in the open, but as the next was damp after a shower, and they had reached a goodly farmhouse Mr. Wheeler was able to make a bargain for accommodations in the barn, and to use a field near by for the evening camp fire. There was great skurrying around in making preparations for supper. The boys attended to the fire; the girls prepared the food. The farm supplied them with the longed-for milk and eggs, so that it was a lordly feast, "truly baronial," Fred called it.

"I'm having the time of my life," he declared, as he seated himself between Judy and Kathleen, a tin cup of milk in one hand and a huge sandwich in the other.

"That might be a compliment to us or to your supper. Which is it?" asked Judy.

"Both," returned Fred biting off a great mouthful which prevented further remark for some time.

Every one was hungry and the pile of sandwiches disappeared like magic. "At this rate," Mrs. Gray commented, "we shall be starving by to-morrow."

"Trust to luck! trust to luck! Stare fate in the face," warbled Betty. "If we have nothing else we can subsist on lump sugar. I never knew its sustaining properties till we took this trip, and carried those nice neat boxes of it. I certainly thank Mr. Wheeler for the suggestion."

— "What Wheeler doesn't know about camping and



tramping isn't worth knowing," said Sig. "He certainly is a Jim Dandy guide. He ——" But he interrupted himself by springing to his feet and uttering a wild whoop of joy.

Kathleen gave his jacket a twitch. "Sig, behave yourself," she exclaimed. "You are enough to scare us all to death. What do you see?"

"What do I see?" Sig struck an attitude and shaded his eyes with his hand. "Methinks I see a damsel approaching. She beareth a metal trencher. Its contents I cannot yet perceive, but at this distance they have the very face and likeness of doughnuts."

"Doughnuts!" The cry went along the line. The boys began to rub their stomachs with a circular motion in anticipation, each murmuring in chorus, "Umm Umm Umm!"

"Sounds good to me," declared Mr. Wheeler going forward to meet the woman who truly was bringing them a milk-pan piled high with fresh doughnuts.

"Mis' Blaney cal'lated you might be pleased to have these for your supper," she said. "They ain't been fried but about an hour, and I guess they'll go 'round, though there's a good many of you." She looked around doubtfully at the circle of boys and girls.

"Oh, they'll go around," returned Mr. Wheeler. "Please tell Mrs. Blaney that she couldn't have sent

us anything more acceptable. She can let me know the price when I go up to settle in the morning."

"Gee whiz!" whispered Sig to Kathleen, "I thought it was a slight tribute to our worth, and it seems we have to pay for it."

Kathleen laughed. "You couldn't expect a canny New England housewife to give away all that for nothing. I heard Mr. Wheeler say that he tried to negotiate for more than milk, butter and eggs, but did not believe he could. Evidently a family consultation has resulted in the sacrifice of the batch of doughnuts upon the altar of Mammon."

"Well, free or not, they are mighty good," asserted Sig setting his teeth in the crisp brown crust of one. "I'm willing, for one, to pay the price."

This was the unanimous decision after they had tested the excellent doughnuts, and all declared they were exactly the thing to finish up with.

"Maybe they will give us buckwheat cakes for breakfast," remarked Billy Bodine.

"Billy, you dub, don't you know enough to be aware of what it would mean to bake griddle cakes for this crowd?" cried Sig. "We'd be till noon at it. I know, for I have baked them for the fellows at home, and it is nobody's easy job, I can tell you. It kept me going to provide enough for six. I never knew before what was meant by things going off like hot cakes."

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"Then we'll strike out the cakes," agreed Billy.  
"Could they have sausage, say?"

"Not at this time of year," Mrs. Gray told him.  
"We are lucky to get the fresh milk, butter and eggs. You mustn't be so lofty in your ambitions, Billy."

A second delegation from the farmhouse announced that there were two beds to be offered if any of the ladies would like to occupy them. But the ladies decided otherwise, saying, after the messenger had departed, that they knew the merits of clean straw and hay but who could say what beds might be until they were seen and felt.

They were all tired enough to seek the loft early, and climbed up a ladder leading to it with many exclamations and much laughter. A board partition separated the two apartments, the girls taking one, the boys the other, and here, with their ponchos adjusted by the light of a lantern, they laid them down in the sweet smelling hay to rest.

Kathleen and Judy were aroused early the next morning by an unusual tickling in their ears. Half awake they began drowsily to brush away the ends of hay which disturbed them, but presently a little ripple of laughter made them open their eyes and there was Kitty amusing herself by seeing how long she could keep them unaware that it was she with a bit of straw who was teasing them.

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"Getting up time," she cried. "I have been up and have had an adventure already."

At this her two friends sat up and looked round. "I forgot where we were," said Judy rubbing her eyes. "I was a long time getting asleep but I made up for it."

"It was just the other way with me," Kitty told her. "I went to sleep immediately but I woke with the dawn. Talk about noises! Everything on the place was talking at once, roosters, hens, pigs, calves, sheep, dogs, cows, people, and I couldn't sleep a wink, so up I got and thought I would get ahead of you all. I stole by a pile of slumbering boys and down the ladder to look for water so I could make my ablutions. It wasn't quite light, and the first thing I knew I was in a whole flock, or herd or whatever you call it, of calves. They were young things and didn't know enough to do any harm, but I scampered past them and out into the barn-yard, and there, what do you think? I found myself right among the cattle. I don't mind a calm-eyed, respectable cow at a safe distance, but a whole covey of them is too much for me, so back I flew, scattered the calves right and left, and clumb the ladder to our safe and tranquil loft."

"That was an adventure," agreed her friends.

"Did you see any humans?" inquired Judy.

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"I believe there were two or three milking the cows, though I didn't stop to take notes."

"Are the calves still there?" queried Kathleen.

"Presumably, though I believe the cows have departed," Kitty told her.

Just then a voice from the other side of the partition called out, "Want some water, girls? Fresh from the pump."

"Exactly what we do want," answered Kitty.

The bucket of water was set within reach, then tin basins and towels were put into execution and before long the whole company, with "morning faces," had descended the ladder and were ready for breakfast. The boys had a fire going and a kettle of water in process of boiling.

"Is it to be coffee?" inquired Judy interestedly.

"Coffee it is," returned Sig, "and it's up to me to see that it is all right. Where's Kath? She'll help me out. I feel as if I were making it for a regiment."

Kathleen soon came up and the huge pot of coffee was in preparation before long. It was an unusual treat and all looked forward to it.

"My, what a feed! and how good it smells," said Billy Bodine throwing down an armful of wood he had been gathering. "Bacon and eggs, bread and butter, and you don't mean to say that is real cream?"

"Just so," Judy assured him. "All ready, Kath?"

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"I think so. The coffee must be done. You can lift it off, Sig."

Every one stood around expectant, cups in hand while Sig essayed to remove the coffee-pot from the fire. But, alas, for best laid schemes, just as he was carefully carrying it to a safe place, meaning to set it upon a flat stone, he tripped, tried to gain his balance, but sat down violently, and lost his hold upon the coffee-pot which fell over and its contents went gushing forth, a brown and aromatic flood.

All rushed forward to try to save the situation, but it was no use. Poor Sig sat perfectly still, quite crushed as one after another hurled condemnation at him. "You clumsy duffer, why didn't you look where you were going?" cried Fred.

"You old dub, you'd better go to a gymnasium and learn to walk," remarked Harvey.

"Oh, dear," wailed Judy, "and I don't believe I ever wanted anything so much in my life as that cup of coffee."

"I wish I were a dog or a cat," said Billy Bodine, watching the brown stream soaking into the earth. "I'd get down there and lap it up. I have half a mind to do it anyhow."

"Breakfast getting cold! Breakfast getting cold!" cried Kitty. "You all had better make up your minds to enjoy what you have instead of standing there cry-

ing over spilt coffee. I mean to make the best of my eggs and bacon while they are hot."

"But we have such delicious cream," mourned Molly. "What shall be done with it?"

At this Sig suddenly sprang to his feet and raced off to the farmhouse like the wind.

"What does that mean?" inquired Fred looking after the running figure. "What's his particular hurry?"

"Gone to hide his diminished head, I suppose," returned Billy.

"Gone to ask them to take back the cream," suggested Kitty.

"To find out how quickly he can get to the station and when the next train leaves," Harvey speculated.

But their suppositions took another direction when they saw Sig returning carefully carrying a blue bowl. He beamed upon them all as he came up. "I wasn't going to stand for any more reproaches," he said. "You shall have your coffee, you set of discontented, whimpering grumblers. I'll make some more. It may not be good for you and I may be catering to your gross appetites, but since you take it so to heart you shall be indulged."

"Oh, Sig, how did you get it?" inquired Judy.

"Asked for it," returned Sig coolly. "I knew these people were ready to sell anything from an egg to the

farm itself, so I acted upon my knowledge of them and you see I came out on top. I took all they had, but they can get more."

"We'll call it after breakfast instead of after dinner coffee," said Molly happily.

"You've done 'noble,' my boy," remarked Harvey. "Your past offense is entirely wiped out. You have paid the penalty of your misconduct by having to eat a cold breakfast."

"Indeed then it isn't cold," spoke up Molly. "I covered it up and set it near the fire to keep warm."

"Thoughtful child," responded Sig. "You have my devoted thanks."

The second brewing of coffee was watched so tenderly, guarded so severely that there was no danger of its being lost like the first, and the fact that it was not looked for made it all the more prized.

Breakfast over they took up the line of march again, ready for the long tramp which should take them over the next stage of their journey.



## CHAPTER XV

### DOGGEREL AND A DOG

**D**AWN on the mountain! The pilgrims camped below the summit, but set out through the rolling mists to climb to the top by sunrise. Perhaps to none of the party did the experience mean more than to Judy and Kathleen. They drew close to each other and stood hand in hand to watch the first quivering line of light gleam through the parting clouds, the clouds which were drifting off through the valleys below. A solemn stillness fell upon the light-hearted group; the chatterers were silent, and the boys stood with hats off as if in a sanctuary while the golden flame of the sun shot out of the east, and presently flooded the mountain top with light. Mrs. Gray's was the first voice to break the silence:

"In flame of sunrise bathe my mind,  
O Master of the Hidden Fire,  
That when I wake, clear-eyed may be  
My soul's desire,"

she quoted.

"I was saying that to myself," whispered Kathleen to Judy who merely squeezed her hand in response, not yet being ready to speak.

"Well, it was worth it," said Fred, as they began the descent. "It was worth the climb. I, for one, shall never forget it."

"Nor I," returned Judy by whose side he was walking, for at last they had turned their gaze from the east and the now too brilliant sun. "We certainly are lucky in having a clear morning," Judy went on, "for it seems to me, from all we hear, that nine times out of ten it is cloudy, or at least misty."

"It's been a great trip all through," returned Fred, "and let us hope it will keep so to the end."

"It has been a great trip, yet I shall not be sorry to get back to the grove of the long pines," Judy answered.

"Is that what Kuequenáku means? I have been intending to ask."

"Yes, it is what the Delaware Indians would call it. It isn't easy to find an appropriate name which is neither too long nor too uncouth, and which is suitable and musical. Kuequenáku looks rather long and unpronounceable when it is written but spoken we all thought it very musical, and it so exactly suits our grove of white pines."

"Right you are. Hallo! what's the racket?" He ran on ahead to where several of the others were laughing, scrambling and explaining. When Judy came up she discovered that nothing worse had happened than the loss of a box of cut sugar which had

slipped from Kitty's grasp and its contents were now rolling down a deep ravine beyond reach.

"Kit looked so horrified as she stood gazing after those leaping lumps," said Molly, "we just couldn't do a thing about it but laugh."

"I rescued ten pieces," said Sig triumphantly holding out those he had managed to secure.

"Such a scramble," laughed Mrs. Gray; "it is a wonder somebody's neck was not broken by falling down that ravine."

"The Tragedy of Sugar Lump Gulch," put in Harvey, swinging himself up from a precarious footing to the spot where the rest were standing. "Couldn't manage to save any more than these." He held out a few more of the lumps.

"Well, it's well it's no worse," said Fred cheerfully. "Those having a sweet tooth will be the worst sufferers, but it isn't as bad an accident as that which happened to the coffee, for we can do without sugar easier than coffee."

Then arose an argument as to which they could or could not get along best without, coffee or sugar, but the discussion was called off by Mr. Wheeler who warned them that they were wasting time fruitlessly and that they had better take up their line of march.

Nothing very exciting happened that day except that a small dog suddenly appeared from nowhere and

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attached himself to Nannie Bates who was always ready to fall on her knees before any canine, and who made such a fuss over this specimen that there was no getting rid of him. No amount of questioning casual travellers whom they met brought forth any information about the little dog. Nannie vowed she would not abandon him to the wilds, so he trotted along contentedly at her heels, she declaring she would take all responsibility concerning him and meant to carry him to her own home. "He has such lovely eyes and such a beautiful disposition," she declared. "I don't care if he is just plain dog of no special breed. These little nobody's dogs are often the smartest kind."

"I thought you had one dog already," said Judy.

"So I have, but what of that?"

"Suppose they don't agree."

"Oh, I think they will, and if they don't one can sleep in the attic and the other in my room."

"And I believe you would go and sleep in the attic yourself if you thought this little cur was lonely."

"I shouldn't mind doing it in the least," declared Nan.

Here Sig burst out with a limerick:

"There was a young person named Nan,  
Who said, If I can't then I can.  
She lived in an attic  
And became so dogmatic  
She declared it an excellent plan."

Every one laughed, but their laughter turned to groans when Harvey remarked, "That's what might be called doggerel."

However, Sig's limerick started them all to making various attempts which waxed sillier and sillier, the one by Billy Bodine being voted the very silliest. It ran :

" Nannie has a little dog  
Which follows at her heels  
And dances on his hinder legs  
Whenever Nannie squeals."

They ended with an imitation of " Mary had a little Lamb," each verse winding up with a chorus of " Bow, wow, wow," which was considered very effective, and Nannie, without the intention, furnished entertainment for much of the day. She decided to name her little follower White Mountains and call him Mounty, for short, so Mounty he became and learned to answer to his name before the journey was over. He never reached Nannie's home, however, although the account of why he did not must come a little later.

There was great cheering for the Muskoday Camp Fire Girls, for Camp Kuequenáku, for Camp Winnegen, for everybody and everything connected with the expedition as the trappers neared the grove of the long pines, so that the stay-at-homes were notified of their coming and rushed up the hill to meet them, arriving breathless, but ready with enthusiastic welcomes. An-

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Annabel projected herself upon Kathleen with rapturous greetings, and began to pour forth accounts of the doings at camp during the absence of the travellers. Evelyn toiling up the hill, ponderously, was the last to arrive on the scene, and to say, between gasps, "So glad you are all back safe and sound." That night there was a gathering around the fire to hear the "Count," the songs, and all the rest pertaining to the trip. Mounty lay curled up at Nannie's feet, looking up with wistful eyes from time to time, but seeming to understand that here were friends.

Although Annabel snuggled close to Kathleen, and insisted upon holding her hand most of the evening, she and Evelyn appeared to be great chums and giggled over their secrets after they had reached Minnewawa and were preparing for bed. Nothing was said about a change of roommates, so Judy and Kathleen found themselves again sharing the same apartment and rejoiced in it.

It was the next morning that Judy thought to ask if any one had been to see Aunt Mercy. "Some of the girls were there the day after you left," she was told, "but no one has been since."

"Then," said Judy, turning to Kathleen, "I think it is up to us to go over this morning and tell her about our trip. She will be so pleased to hear."

Kathleen agreed and Nannie, who was with them,

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asked if she might go too. "I'd like to show her Mounty," she said. "She is so fond of animals and will be interested in him. You don't suppose Rover would bite him, do you?"

"Poor Rover, with scarce a tooth in his head, how could he?" returned Judy. "He has a goodly bark, to be sure, but no bite to speak of. Malty may not be altogether pleased, but he can keep out of the way if he chooses."

So off they set, Mounty trotting at their heels, and happy enough to be counted one of the party. Aunt Mercy was not in sight, nor did she appear when they gave their familiar call. "Out in the garden, probably," concluded Judy. Around to the side of the house they went to discover Aunt Mercy on the side porch. She was sitting on the top step, her head bowed over something she held in her lap. As the girls drew near she lifted a distressed countenance.

Kathleen sprang forward. "Aunt Mercy," she cried, "what is it? What is the matter?"

Aunt Mercy drew aside an old shawl which covered something at her side and disclosed Rover who lay with his head in her lap. "He is sick," she said. "I don't know what is the matter with him. He hasn't eaten much for several days, and this morning early I found him lying at the foot of the steps and he couldn't get up. I carried him here and tried to keep him warm,

but I can't get him to take anything, yet he followed me so with his eyes that I just gave up and sat here." Her lips quivered as she drew the shawl again over the sick creature.

Judy and Nannie came up, but Mountry kept at a discreet distance, sitting with ears erect ready if needed. "Do you know anything about sick dogs?" inquired Kathleen in a low voice.

Judy shook her head. "I know a good deal about first aid to humans," she returned, "but not about other creatures. What about you, Nannie?"

"I'm afraid I don't know much, either," she told them. "We always send for a vet. when my dog is ill. It is generally the result of overfeeding, he says, but in this case," she lowered her voice, "I am afraid it is old age."

Kathleen nodded understandingly and turned again to Aunt Mercy. "All the same," said Judy, "I wish we could get hold of a vet., or at least of some one who understands what to do for dumb beasts when they are ill." She walked toward the gate uncertainly as if half expecting a passer-by might be of assistance.

Kathleen sat down by Aunt Mercy. Nannie took a seat on the lowest step. "Did you eat a good breakfast?" Kathleen presently asked Aunt Mercy.

"Oh, my dear, I couldn't eat any. I didn't want to leave Rover."



"That is what I imagined," said Kathleen, "and I don't believe the chickens have had any either, they are making such a fuss."

"I'll feed the chickens," offered Nannie, springing up. She followed Kathleen into the kitchen.

"I am going to make some coffee and toast and boil an egg for her," said Kathleen. "You'll find the chicken feed in the pantry, Nannie."

Nannie went out with the pan of feed to satisfy the clamoring fowls while Kathleen quietly prepared a breakfast which she took out to Miss Mercy. "Please eat this for our sakes and for Rover's, too," she urged. "You will be ill, too, and then how can you take care of Rover?" This argument had its effect and Aunt Mercy consented to drink the coffee and eat the egg, although she refused the toast.

"Give it to that little dog over there," she said, for the first time noticing Mouny, who, at the suggestive smell of food, had drawn near and now sat with wishful expression at the foot of the steps. Miss Mercy tossed him bits of toast, and, being heartened by her meal, seemed more ready to talk. "I never saw that little dog before," she remarked. "I wonder whose he is?"

Kathleen sat down and told her Mouny's story so far as it went, and Miss Mercy was sufficiently interested to ask some questions about the mountain trip,

but she soon ceased to question and again turned her attention to Rover who lay quietly.

Meanwhile Judy had a dozen minds to go back to camp, to go to the nearest house, to do something in order to bring skilled assistance. She had about determined to go to a neighbor's, and was starting down the road when she saw a man approaching. As he drew near she ran forward to meet him. "Why, Mr. Perry," she cried, "I am so glad it is you. I think Providence must have sent you, for I never saw you on this road before."

"I don't often travel it," he confessed, "but there is a farmer up this way that I thought I might as well hunt up on a little matter. But what's this about Providence sending me? Anything wrong?"

"Do you know Miss Mercy Blodgett?" inquired Judy.

The man shook his head. "Name seems sort of familiar, but I don't believe I have met the lady. What about her?"

"She lives all alone in this house right here, all alone with only her dog and her cat and cow. We have adopted her and she is a dear. I'll tell you about it later, but what I want now is some one to doctor her dog. He is sick and she doesn't appear able to find out what is the matter. We are afraid it is simply old age and that he has come to the end."

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"I've doctored a good many creatures on and off," returned Mr. Perry, "and if it is anything curable maybe I can be of some use. In here, did you say?" He indicated the gate which they had now reached.

Judy lifted the latch and together they went around to where the others were sitting. "This is our good friend, Mr. Perry," Judy announced. "He knows about animals, Aunt Mercy, and he wants to see if he can do anything for Rover."

Aunt Mercy made a stiff little inclination of the head and said: "I hope the gentleman will excuse my rising. I am very much obliged to him for coming in." She drew down the shawl and softly stroked Rover's silky ears. He was too weak to resent the intrusion of a stranger, but put forth a feeble tongue to caress the hand which stroked him.

"How old is your dog, madam?" asked Mr. Perry, bending over to get a better look.

"He's about, let me see, about eighteen I should think," responded Miss Mercy looking up anxiously to ascertain if this age would appear a great one.

Mr. Perry looked grave, as Rover, whose last affectionate effort had been too much for him, was now breathing in short gasps. "Any milk?" asked the man turning to Kathleen.

"Plenty of it. Shall I get some?" she asked.

"A little, and a teaspoon, please."



Kathleen brought the required articles and Mr. Perry, drawing a small bottle from his pocket, added a few drops from it to the milk, and then deftly poured a teaspoonful into Rover's mouth. After two or three teaspoonfuls had been given Rover revived visibly, and to Miss Mercy's delight, weakly rapped his tail against the boards. "I guess that is about the best we can do," said Mr. Perry. "You might give him a trifle more after a while. It will keep up his strength. Maybe he will take a little nap. Suppose you try it. You might get up and ease yourself a bit, madam."

It required some persuasion to make Miss Mercy do this, but seeing her dog more comfortable, she at last consented to move while Rover, who had dropped into a quiet slumber, failed to miss her. "Oh, sir, I am so much obliged to you," she said fervently. "Do you think he will get well soon?"

The man's grave face became even graver. He looked down compassionately at the little pathetic figure with its anxious eyes. "I wish I could say that I believed he would get well, but all I can say is that he is an unusually old dog. They seldom live to be over twelve, and the good Lord has let him stay with you beyond his time. I'll stop on my way back and see if there is anything more that I can do," he added, turning to Kathleen.

"I shall be here," she returned.

"And I, too," Judy assured him.

He nodded and went on his way. Miss Mercy, realizing the true condition of her dog, went back to her place, her eyes full of trouble.

"I think I'd better go back unless I can be of use here," said Nannie. "I think some one should tell Miss Keene why you are staying, don't you?"

"Decidedly," replied Judy. "Too bad you must go on your way alone, Nannie."

"But I shall not be alone, for Mounty will be with me," she answered, smiling.

But she reckoned without her host, for Mounty, after following her a few steps, ran back, looking questioningly from one to the other, and finally settled himself at Aunt Mercy's feet from which position he would not budge.

"Did you ever?" exclaimed Nannie stopping short. "Well, if he wants to stay it is all right. He can come home with you girls. I don't mind going on alone."

Stay Mounty did and when a couple of hours later Rover drew his last sigh, he showed his sympathy by timidly licking Aunt Mercy's clasped hands upon which infrequent tears were falling, for even in her sorrow the New England spirit of reserve showed itself.

When Mr. Perry returned he made a grave for

Rover under the shadow of the tree which had sheltered him in summer hours for many a year. Miss Mercy bore herself bravely, would not listen to the girls when they proposed remaining overnight with her, and said: "I shall have to go on in the same way sooner or later and a day more or less can make no difference. I shall miss him. Yes, I shall miss him. He was so faithful, such a good watch-dog, and I always felt so safe with him here, but I shall not be afraid. Please don't think that, my dears."

So they left her, but they did not leave her alone, for Mouny refused to go, cowered close to Aunt Mercy, and looked to her for protection when Mr. Perry would forcibly remove him.

"Why not let him stay?" whispered Judy. "Nannie won't care and she can get him any time." Therefore they went off without him, leaving him quite content. Malt, rather supercilious, but not wholly aggressive, sat aloof evidently determining to let time decide whether the newcomer should be considered an enemy or not.

On the way home the girls told Mr. Perry of how they had discovered Aunt Mercy, of their interest in her, of her loneliness and all the rest.

He listened attentively. "Seems to be somewhat in the same box that I am," he remarked. "Guess I'll have to look in on her once in a while after you at the

camp have gone. About once a week during the winter, I might make it."

"Oh, will you do that?" cried Kathleen. "We shall feel so much better about her if you would."

"I'll do it," he responded. Then after a silence he said, "Do you know what I think about that little dog you left there? He acts to me as if he had belonged to such another old lady. Maybe she died: maybe she left the town and he was out looking for her. When he came on Miss Blodgett he suspected she was the nearest he would ever get to what he was used to and that's why he wouldn't leave."

"I shouldn't wonder if that were the exact truth," exclaimed the girls, and it was, although they did not find it out for another year.

Judy and Kathleen did not hesitate to tell Nannie of Mr. Perry's surmise and she responded, as they felt sure she would, "If he wants to stay and dear Aunt Mercy wants him, far be it from me to coax him away," she said. "It seems almost as if he were heaven-sent to comfort her." Therefore this is why Mounty never saw Nannie's home.

## CHAPTER XVI

### VISITORS

“**D**EAR me, how the time does fly,” said Kathleen one morning not long after the return from the mountain trip. “Only a couple of weeks more and then, ‘back to the mines.’”

Judy looked up from the letter she was writing. “I am realizing that fact, too. Dating letters brings one to cold facts as to time. I think it is the most wonderful summer I have ever had up here, and that is saying a good deal.”

“It is the most wonderful summer I ever had anywhere,” responded Kathleen. “It seems as if my very soul had grown to heights I never dreamed of.”

“Speaking of growth,” returned Judy, “I give in on the question of Annabel; she is getting to be quite a nice child. You were right about her. Of course I don’t mean that she is overburdened with sense as yet, but if she keeps on she will get there. Miss Keene was talking about her last night.”

“Well, you started her on the right track.”

“And was side-tracked myself before we reached the



first station. No, Thurénsera, you are the one who did the good work."

"Not at all. You made the first sacrifice, and headed her in the right direction, then I came along and shunted her a little further, next Evelyn hitched on her engine, and so it has gone."

Judy laughed. "Imagine calling Evelyn an engine! If she is any she is a freighter of the most ponderous type, good old Ev. Heigho! I shall miss my daily life with all these nice girls, but so long as I have you, Kath, it will not matter much."

Kathleen was silent. The subject of her winter plans had been taboo between them since their quarrel. The time was fast approaching when some decision must be made, but Kathleen meant to defer it as long as possible. Her school would not open till October, and she had promised to make some visits in Brightwood upon her return from camp.

The girls returned to their letter writing, but had not finished before an interruption came. Annabel came flying down the path. "Hurry up, girls," she cried. "Come on down to the wharf. Company's coming."

The girls hastily laid aside their writing materials. "Who? Who?" they cried.

"Don't know," Annabel answered, "but the motor boat is coming and there are two or three strange per-

sons in it, at least they looked like strangers to me; maybe you will know them."

"Size, age and sex required," said Judy as they started forth.

"One man, rather elderly, two girls, at least they seemed young from a distance."

"Some friends of Miss Keene's or one of the councilors, no doubt," decided Judy, "but no matter. Arrivals are rare enough to be exciting."

They hastened to the wharf which the boat was rapidly nearing, and soon waving handkerchiefs and the cry of "Wohelo! Wohelo!" greeted those on shore and indicated that here were friends to some of them.

The group of girls answered the call, and all watched eagerly. Presently Kathleen, followed by Judy, rushed down to the very edge of the wharf. "It's Uncle Addison!" "It's Mr. Foster!" they exclaimed. Then immediately the cry went up: "It's Sadie, Sadie Wallace! It's Tilda, too. Hurrah for Muskoday! Hurrah for Ohuanuáh-Nah!"

The shouts finally subsided into the less audible, though more ardent welcome of hugs and kisses, and the visitors were borne off up the hill by excited attendants carrying hand-bags, umbrellas, wraps and all such impedimenta. "Where did you come from? How did you get here? How long can you stay?" The questions came thick and fast.

When all had settled down on the big porch of the Wigwam, the how and why and wherefore came to be known. "I had some business in Boston," Mr. Foster told Kathleen, "so I thought it wouldn't be much out of my way to run up here to see you all. I happened to be in Mr. Furnival's office, and there I met Miss Sadie, who was getting ready to head this way, so we came along together. Miss Tilda was a surprise we found at the station this morning, so now you have it."

"And Tilda?" Kathleen turned to her lively little friend.

"Oh, I came up to Maine with my aunt, and when we reached Portland I simply announced that I should die of disappointment if I couldn't have a glimpse of you girls and your camp. I made Sig a factor, too, so altogether I was too much for Auntie, and she allowed me to fly off on my own hook for a week, then pick up Sig and join her at her cottage on the beloved island she so dotes on. The fact that I promised faithfully to drag Sig along with me was what did the business. Auntie adores Sig." Tilda beamed on Kathleen who gave her a hug.

"It is the crowning joy," Sadie was saying to Judy. "Mr. Furnival insisted that I should have this holiday. He and Mrs. Furnival have made wonderful plans for me, and this is a part of them."

"It is a crowning joy for all of us." Kathleen turned

to her. "Judy and I were saying not an hour ago that it has been such a wonderful summer, but we didn't dream that more wonderful things would come into it."

How much more interesting and exciting things were to come about they all had little idea, for they developed one after the other. In the first place Kathleen had a long talk with Mr. Foster which made him see clearly what was best for her future.

"I reckon you're right, Katharine," he said. "Nobody knows what may happen in this world, and it is best to be prepared for downs as well as ups. As you say, your aunt will probably need you later on more than she does now when she has the children at home and Miss Bolton, too. By the time you have finished your course at the Art school, Tip will need a different training and will have to go away to school, then, after a while Emily will have to go, but not too soon, so if you haven't a home of your own by that time you can slip into ours and carry on your art doings there. Yes, honey, I reckon you're right, and your aunt will agree with me, I know, much as she wants you. She's so happy getting back the children that she'll agree to anything that looks good to any one else. What about expenses? Can you see your way through?"

Kathleen hesitated. "Not altogether," she confessed, "but I hope to be earning something soon.

Judy insists upon my spending the winter with her as I did last year, but I would much rather not. I cannot bear to be receiving everything and be giving nothing. I am sure Mr. Falkner is quite pleased to have me stay, but I don't feel the same about Mrs. Falkner, at least I think for Judy's sake she will consent to anything, but it is because of Judy and not because of me personally."

Mr. Foster nodded. "I understand, and I like your independent spirit. Don't you worry. I reckon your Aunt Milly is able to stand by you. She has the best right. Don't you worry. We'll see you through."

"If you and she would lend me the money I could pay it back when I begin to earn something," said Kathleen eagerly.

"None of that. None of that," returned Mr. Foster.

"But I would like to," persisted Kathleen.

"All right then ; we'll leave it like this : when you paint a big picture and get a hundred thousand dollars for it, or if you get a job to decorate somebody's palace, we'll talk about it. You can call it a loan if it makes you any more comfortable."

So that much was settled, and Kathleen with a full heart accepted the situation while telling herself that when the time came that she could pay the debt she would most certainly do it. Meanwhile it was a happy outlook, and the fact that Mr. Foster understood and

sympathized made it but that much more a pleasure instead of a hard and unwelcome duty.

She went off to find Judy to tell her. "The dearest and best man in the world has grubbed up all my stones in the way and opened all the high walls for me," she announced, as she found Judy busy over the mail which had just come in.

"Explain, explain," cried Judy. "Sit right down and explain. I have read the one important letter and the rest can wait. I am in a state of ferment over something that I have just learned and I hope you can tell me something to counteract the effect."

"Oh, Judy, have you had bad news?"

"Bad to me, but not necessarily so to any one else. I suppose many persons would be pleased with such. But go on, I will disclose my disgruntlement later. I want to hear your tale first."

So then Kathleen told of the talk with her Uncle Addison, ending up by asking: "Do you wonder that I call him the dearest and best man in the world?"

"My own old Dad is a close second," Judy declared. "Well, Kath, I certainly am delighted, the more so that it eases my own private vexation. Two or three years more of you close by means a lot, and to think that you will be really equipped with a profession without that anxious strain which has been the thing I

feared. Now, what do you suppose is mother's latest idea? She'll carry it out, too; I am sure she will, although Dad won't like it one little bit."

"What in the world is it, Judy?"

"Well, it seems that the butler isn't coming back, and because of that the cook prefers to seek another place and mother declares she is not going to be bothered with strange servants, and is tired of house-keeping anyhow, wants a rest from it, something different, so she wants to spend the winter at a hotel. Whither mother goes Julianna must perforce go also, and so, my dear, you know what is before me. Dear old Dad will dislike it as much as I, but when mother takes the injured, aggrieved stand he is helpless, and submits like any lamb. Of course a hotel apartment isn't quite so insufferable as an ordinary boarding-house, but ——" Judy paused and Kathleen knew she was thinking that this would necessarily put an end to any plan of having her friend with her.

In her heart of hearts Kathleen wondered a little if Mrs. Falkner had not been thinking of this very thing, and had arranged accordingly. However this might be, there was no longer any possibility of an argument with Judy upon the question, and that much was cleared up. The next thing was to talk to Sadie, who might know of some modest little place where Kathleen could be comfortable for the winter. The thought

of Sadie suddenly gave rise to an idea which had not occurred before. However, she first exclaimed: "Oh, Judy, I know you will hate it, even though it is for only a few months."

"That is what mother says. She tells me further that this is her opportunity to have some alterations made in the house, and some papering and painting done, which, of course, was another point gained with Dad. He hates to have the house torn up, but oh, Kath, it is good-bye to my hope of having you with me, I suppose."

But Kathleen was wise enough not to say that she had decided against this in any event, but began to tell of what was in her mind. "Do you know I have just been thinking that I might be able to get Sadie's rooms," she said.

"Wouldn't that be fine?" cried Judy. "Oh, don't I wish I could go in with you! What fun we could have, but mother would have nervous prostration if I suggested such a thing. However, we could have cozy little suppers there, the two of us, and all sorts of good times. We must see about it right away."

But when they sought Sadie she was deep in a conference with Miss Keene, and this proved to be of such an interesting nature that other things were quite set aside for the time being. It was Sadie herself who came to them with a piece of news. "What do you



think, girls," she began, "Miss Keene has proposed that there shall be a wedding at camp."

"Not yours, Sadie, not yours?" cried Judy. "Why, I thought you expected to be married in your own home town?"

"So I did," she answered, "but there is an epidemic of diphtheria there and my mother has fled with the younger children. Florence has taken my place with Mr. Furnival, you know. Dr. Moberly doesn't think it would be safe to go back home just yet and we hate to postpone the wedding day, so dear Miss Keene has suggested that we be married here. It would be no further for mother to come, and it would be wonderful to have all my dear Camp Fire sisters at hand. What do you think?"

"Think? That it would be the finest thing ever," responded Judy, "and so unique. Oh, Sadie, do, do be married at Camp Kuequenáku. Have you written to the doctor?"

"Did it immediately; and to mother, too. I am sure the doctor will be more than pleased, for it will be getting rid of all the fuss that most men loathe, and he loves the outdoor life."

True enough, it was just as Sadie said. Dr. Moberly was more than pleased with the plan. He would meet Mrs. Wallace at any point she might suggest and would bring her and Sadie's sister Florence with him.

The news spread like wild-fire. A wedding in camp was something undreamed of, and even Camp Fire Girls are ready to consider such an event of the most absorbing interest. Since it was through her meeting with Sadie that Judy had become a Camp Fire Girl, and through Judy that Sadie had met Dr. Moberly, it was to be expected that Judy would be best girl, though all the others clamored to be attendants. Tilda declared that she would like to see herself leaving before the important event, and the boys of Camp Winnegen said they didn't see how such an affair could take place without their aid.

Good little Sadie, however, took things very quietly. She wanted them all to know that there would be no great doings. Everything must be as simple as possible. She had come up for a rest and she didn't mean to tire herself out by making unnecessary preparations. She wanted to see Miss Blodgett and her cow. She wanted to meet the hermit and hear him fluting to the birds. She would like to go to the old church on the hill. All these would interest her, for she had not come across them in her former visits to the camp.

So her presence did not in any way alter the daily life, except that she was the center of attention. She had a lovely voice, was always thoughtful and helpful, strong and sweet. She had been the first of the Muskoday girls to win the rank of Torch Bearer,

and had always been of the greatest assistance to Miss Keene.

"I shall miss my Torch Bearer," said Miss Keene, "but I know she will soon have her own group of Camp Fire Girls and will pass on the light which has been given to her." Judy drew a long sigh as she heard her Guardian say this. She had hoped this summer would win for her a like honor, but as she looked back she feared she had fallen below Miss Keene's expectations and she made a high resolve to do her utmost, during the time that was left, to retrieve herself.

"I *will* be nice to Annabel. I will not be so childish as to let my personal likes and dislikes interfere with my duty," she told Kathleen that night. "Sadie always inspires me. When I remember how she has risen above all sorts of disadvantages and has maintained her fineness, her nobility of character in spite of everything I feel like a worm of the dust. Hear me, Kathleen Gilman. No longer do you see your Julianna an uncontrolled weakling. From this out I mean to prove myself a gracious, well-poised woman. I have striven and striven to become worthy of being a Torch Bearer, but I have kept Judy Falkner in front of the ideal I should have had, and she has got to get out of the way."

"You dear Judy," said Kathleen, "I won't have you talk that way. Why, Judy, there isn't a girl in camp

that doesn't acknowledge your leadership, who doesn't respect your opinions. You are fearless for the right always, and speak right out as bravely as possible. I don't always. I am a little too inclined to be afraid of what others will think, though I am getting over that and can say 'No,' much more decidedly than I used."

"Oh, you are a true blue," returned Judy. "Look what you have done for Annabel. She isn't the same girl."

"You began the good work. Perhaps you were harsh to her at first, but that was just what she needed. I came into the game at the psychological moment. Your work was done, and well done, when I took it up."

"Well, I suppose we are all poor critturs," sighed Judy. "We aren't Methuselahs, and perhaps we shall get some sense by the time we are antique dames. Isn't it great having Tilda here? She does make things go, and is so full of fun that the girls think her adorable."

"I wish the dear Hoveys could be here, too," said Kathleen, speaking of two of her closest Brightwood friends, "but they cannot, and they didn't expect to see Sadie married, anyhow, so they will not be disappointed."

Mr. Foster remained but one day and night, but as he left he slipped an envelope into Kathleen's hand,

telling her that it contained the first installment of an allowance, and that each month the same amount would be sent to her.

"It is a loan, remember," said Kathleen.

Mr. Foster laughed, and went on his way promising that she should hear from her aunt before long. "I've had a great time here," he said. "Miss Bolton is getting up a nest of Bluebirds and Emily is one of them, but she'll be a Camp Fire Girl one of these days, I hope, then I'd like to have her come to a camp just like this."

Every one liked the quaint, kindly man and all were sorry to see him go, but the excitement of the approaching wedding was uppermost and everything else was of small import compared to it.

Sadie was borne off to be shown the hermit's hut, and the hermit himself, if possible. He was nowhere to be seen, however, and the girls slipped birch-bark cards with funny messages on them under his door. At Miss Blodgett's they were more fortunate. She had heard all about Sadie, of her brave spirit, of her unselfish devotion to her mother and sisters for whose support she had given most of her salary during the years that she was secretary to Mr. Furnival, so she was welcomed as a friend and was allowed to call the dear old lady Aunt Mercy as did the others. Of course Sukey and Malty and Mounty were introduced. The

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latter was much at home, and had succeeded in winning at least tolerance from the lordly Maltby. Aunt Mercy would not promise to come to the wedding, but admitted that she would like to taste the cake, so the visitors went off after bringing more food for thought to the lonely little woman.

## CHAPTER XVII

### AN OUTDOOR WEDDING

A CIRCLE of girls, with Sadie in the middle, sat under the tall pines of Worship Grove. They were talking over the wedding.

"And aren't we to dress up at all?" asked Annabel dolefully.

"You wouldn't outdress the bride," observed Molly severely.

"But she isn't going to appear in a jumper and a plain skirt, are you, Sadie?" Annabel protested.

"I thought at first that I would," returned Sadie, "for I wanted it to be as simple a dress as possible, then I thought of wearing my ceremonial dress, and have the rest of you do the same, but, after talking it over with Miss Keene, we decided that as this occasion was quite outside of any real Camp Fire ceremony perhaps it would be better just to wear a simple white frock, something light and pretty, but not too dressy."

Annabel's face visibly brightened, and, in fact, the majority of the girls looked pleased.

"We mustn't all wear white," decided Judy, "for we want to give a little color to the picture. I shall

wear that pink batiste I brought along for extra occasions. You might wear your blue, Kathleen."

"I'd like to dress you all up like wood-nymphs," replied Kathleen who sat hugging her knees, "but I suppose it wouldn't do to make a pageant out of it, besides there isn't time to get up costumes. Yes, I'll wear the blue."

"I haven't a blessed thing with me but my travelling frock and this," spoke up Tilda touching the jumper and skirt she wore.

"Oh, somebody can lend you something," suggested Judy.

"I will, I will," came from one and another.

"It will have to be some one Tilda's size or else she will have to take a tuck," remarked Kathleen smiling across at little Tilda.

"You're spared the loan, anyway," laughed Tilda. "I couldn't possibly wear the clothes of a big tall thing like you. I am much obliged to the somebody who will help me out, however."

"It will be rather hard to get flowers," said Kitty Acker. "What shall be done about that?"

"Oh, we can manage," Kathleen told her. "Goldenrod and asters are starting in to blossom, and there are bunchberries, lots of them."

"We shall not need much of anything except for the arch," decided Judy.

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"And that can be of green with a golden bell of the goldenrod in the centre."

"Of course, and it will be lovely," Sadie agreed.

"What about the cake? What about the cake?" spoke up Evelyn.

"Your mind would be on that, wouldn't it, Evy?" laughed Molly. "I say we should all have a hand in it and that we should get at it as soon as possible."

"If we make a white cake it shouldn't be made too soon," declared Kathleen.

"Fruit cake is too precarious. I vote for the white cake," Kitty put in. "What do you say, Sadie?"

"The white cake decidedly. You could never get a fruit cake properly baked."

"And there will be no trouble about white cake if we bake it in several loaves. One quite large one for the real wedding cake and smaller ones to cut up and send away," Kathleen advised.

"Oh me, I have just thought suppose it should rain," exclaimed Nannie. "Wouldn't it be awful?"

"Not so very," replied Sadie smiling. "We could go to the Wigwam, have a big fire in the fireplace and be just as happy."

Judy leaned over to give her a squeeze. "You always were the dearest old optimist," she said; "you would extract sunshine from a coal mine."

"I could do the next thing to it," laughed Sadie,

"for I could get firelight; that's what coal is for, isn't it?"

"All right, be it sunshine or be it rain; be it hot or be it cold we won't let it dampen our spirits," declared Kitty. "Will the future Mrs. Moberly please give the signal to rise; my foot has gone to sleep and I cannot be so wanting in respect to a prospective bride as to get up before she does."

The little group scattered chattering like magpies. It was hard, these days, to settle down to anything like routine, and Miss Keene did not demand too much from her girls. Certain daily duties were performed. The morning swim, the afternoon walk undertaken, but outside these not too much was expected.

The making of the cake resolved itself into a real frolic in which every girl wanted to take part, the most skilful superintending the work.

"Do let me help to beat the eggs," begged Evelyn.

"You may take a hand, of course," Kathleen told her, "but Ev, do be careful and don't upset them or do any queer thing. We shall use only the whites, you know, and take the yolks for the mayonnaise dressing."

"Goodness, how you do get in the way, Evelyn," cried Molly who was carefully carrying a platter of the separated eggs.

Evelyn scuttled out of Molly's way, but in doing so

came into collision with Kitty, who was bearing a pan of flour which she had just carefully sifted. Down the two went. The pan shot out of Kitty's hands and the two girls were well sprinkled from head to foot. Every one ran to the rescue. Molly managed to deposit the precious eggs safely on the table, and Judy, who was measuring sugar, forgot to count. Kitty sat laughing, but Evelyn ruefully brushing the flour out of her hair and eyes exclaimed dolefully: "I might have known something would happen if I tried to help, but I am so thankful it wasn't the eggs."

"That's what we're all thankful for," said Sadie, helping her up and brushing the flour-strewn garments. "It is no great loss, Evelyn, so don't feel so remorseful."

"There is this much to be said," remarked Kitty; "Ev's accident has happened and we needn't count on another one. She seldom has two in one morning."

"I don't intend to have another while this cake is being made," said Evelyn resolutely.

"You wanted a hand in it, and you did have,—in the flour," said Molly laughing.

"Never mind, Evelyn," said Sadie consolingly; "it wasn't any more your fault than Kitty's. There are too many of us in here anyway, and we can't help getting in one another's way."

"I'll go out," offered Evelyn cheerfully, "but please let me give the cake one stir when the batter is ready."

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"You shall give it two stirs if you want to," declared Sadie.

"Sadie, you're a dear," cried Evelyn. "Come on, Annabel, suppose you and I go outside and watch through the window, then I, for one, won't get into any trouble."

"I want to give two stirs, too," cried Annabel over her shoulder as she followed Evelyn out on the porch.

The batter was at last ready, light and delicate. Each girl solemnly walked up and gave two or three stirs. Evelyn, hovering on the door-sill, waited till the last.

"I am so nervous," she cried. "I wish you all would go out. I am so afraid something will happen if you all stand there staring at me."

"I think," remarked Kathleen reflectively, "that one or two of us should be on hand to save the pieces."

Evelyn took this in good part, so all did go out but Kathleen and Sadie. Evelyn approached the table cautiously, gave one or two careful stirs with the spoon, but could not refrain from lifting it up to admire the smooth consistency.

"Don't do that!" some one suddenly called from the window, and of course Evelyn dropped the spoon which flipped over on the floor carrying a spattering of batter with it.

"One little cake the less," sighed Kathleen. "Hurry

out, Evelyn, while we fill the pans, or there will be none left."

"Oh, dear, I am so unfortunate," mourned Evelyn, "but Molly did startle me so."

"She had no business to," declared Kathleen indignantly. "She should have known it was a precarious situation. I'll have it out with her when this business is over."

The grave matter of filling the pans was carried on without mishap. The ring, the thimble and the piece of money were safely imbedded in the largest cake, and finally the baking was accomplished to perfection. The icing was the next important matter, and this, too, was done to the satisfaction of the cooks.

"Ah!" sighed Judy, "but I am glad it is over. I have been on tenter hooks all the morning. Now, Kathleen, do pray put the cakes where the squirrels can't get at them; you remember what they did to the fudge."

"Don't I? Never fear, Julianna, but we shall see to the safety of these precious things," and she bore them off to the pantry where a wire-screened window prevented the intrusion of any impertinent little marauder.

Dr. Moberly arrived that afternoon with Sadie's mother and sister Florence. The two youngest children had been left with an aunt. Mrs. Wallace was a

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sweet, quiet little woman whom Sadie resembled, but Florence was not like either.

"What do you think of her?" asked Kathleen when she and Judy were alone.

"I suppose," returned Judy, "that most persons would consider her much better looking than Sadie, but to my mind she is not half so attractive; she is too Annabel-ish."

Kathleen nodded. "Just my opinion. Well, Judy, if she becomes a Camp Fire Girl there is no telling how she may develop. With such a mother and sister there should be lots of good stuff in her."

"We can only wait and see," replied Judy shaking out her batiste frock. "This will have to be pressed, Kath; it is all in creases."

"So is mine. Let me do yours while I have the irons; I can just as well as not."

"Oh, would you do it? You are sure you don't mind? I must confess that I don't know a blessed thing about ironing. I really must learn."

Kathleen went off with the two frocks hanging over her arm, and encountered more than one girl on her way to the kitchen on a similar errand, so that visions of girls bearing aloft pink or blue or lavender robes appeared through the trees at various periods of the afternoon.

With extra company and a wedding on hand there

was a busy camp the next day. A Council Fire was held the evening before that Sadie might enjoy one more meeting with her Muskoday sisters. It began so solemnly that there were tears in the eyes of more than one emotional girl, but while Miss Keene meant that it should be a more than usually serious occasion, she meant that it should also be a happy and uplifting one, so that when the little procession stole away into the shadows even Annabel's eyes wore a new light and upon Sadie's face was a radiance which expressed the glowing flame within.

A whole troop of boys appeared as helpers the next morning, and there was a merry time fashioning the arch and the golden bell. Dr. Moberly, whom they all knew, would not be left out, but insisted upon sorting flowers, hammering nails and doing a little of everything. It was a brilliant September day with a shimmering light upon the water and drifting cloud shadows upon the distant hills. Fred and Sig motored off to fetch the clergyman, and brought him back in a car piled high with trailing vines and autumn leaves with which they dressed the Wigwam where the wedding feast was to be served.

Under the lofty pines with the girls grouped around like a garland of flowers, Sadie, in her pretty white gown, was married. The girls softly sang the Lohengrin wedding music as the bridal party approached,

and one of their own songs, composed for the occasion, when the ceremony was over.

"Never was such a beautiful wedding," whispered Sadie as one after another gave her a hug and kiss.

"Never was such a wonderful wedding," declared Dr. Moberly as he shook hands with each one.

Then they all trooped up to the Wigwam to have the feast, to cut the cake and to wind up the day with songs and dances. To Judy fell the ring, to Annabel the thimble and to Tilda the piece of money but it was smiling, jolly, good-tempered Evelyn who caught the bouquet, to the chagrin of Florence and some others.

Up the hill the whole party conducted the bridal couple to where the motor car was waiting to take them whither they would not tell, but they were sent on their way with old shoes flung after them, confetti showering them and the cry of "Wohelo! Wohelo for aye!" following them.

"Did you ever see any one with a happier face?" said Judy linking her arm in Miss Keene's as they went down-hill; "Sadie's, I mean."

"You could have said the same of Dr. Moberly's," returned Miss Keene. "I think they will have a complete and happy life. He is a dear fellow and she is one of the dearest girls I ever knew, and that is saying a great deal when I have such a circle of girls."

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"He is nice," agreed Judy, "and to think I didn't like him at all when I first met him."

"Didn't you? Why not?"

Judy laughed. "Because he was so sensible and wouldn't listen to any of my suggestions. He made me feel so small and I couldn't stand his way of putting me down."

"It does some of us good to be put down once in a while," replied Miss Keene.

"Oh, I have learned that and a lot of other things this past year. I was just thinking of the strange circumstances that brought about Sadie's marriage and a lot of other fortunate things. What seemed a terrible misfortune at the moment turned out to be a great good for many people. Let me see: first there were the two children, Mrs. Foster's two children. If Emily had not been knocked down by that motor car and we had failed to be there to pick her up we should never have known anything about those two children, they might never have been restored to their mother and Kathleen would never have known she had an Aunt Emily living. Then Sadie would probably never have met Dr. Moberly, would still have been with Mr. Furnival as his secretary, and Florence would have remained where she was. There are still possibilities for Florence, so the end is not yet."

"No, that is true. The pebble thrown into the

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water widens the circles to the shore. It is very wonderful when one considers how little it takes to affect us in this world. It is a serious thought: one circumstance, an accident, a turning aside, an unexpected meeting can influence so many lives. What seems like disaster can prove to be exactly the opposite. As Jean Paul Richter says: 'What seems the sulphur of disaster and of punishment may expand into the yellow corolla of a future flower.'

Judy pondered over this for a moment then asked suddenly, "What do you think of Florence? Do you think she is as fine as Sadie?"

Miss Keene smiled. "Not yet, but perhaps you girls can make her so."

Judy gave a long sigh. "Another Annabel!" she exclaimed.

"Well, then, so much the more credit to you all if she shows signs of developing as Annabel is doing."

"I suppose so," returned Judy weakly. Then with more interest: "She has improved, Miss Keene, hasn't she?"

"I never knew any one to improve more in a single summer. I haven't the slightest hesitancy now about admitting her to our Camp Fire. She may not reach such heights as Sadie has done, and she may never climb very high, still I don't give up the hope of seeing her become a fine woman one of these days."

"That sounds encouraging to the rest of us who weren't on a very high plane to begin with," said Judy smiling, then, following up her thought: "Isn't Kathleen wonderful?"

"Kathleen is a dear," responded Miss Keene heartily. "There is not the least doubt about that. She is a great acquisition to our Camp Fire, and a strong influence for good."

"And that is all the result of another accident," declared Judy. "If she had not hurt her knee that afternoon on the mountain we would never have discovered her, and where would I be?"

"Where would she be? Still living a discontented existence in that little town of Brightwood."

"Yes, of course, and the Hoveys and Tilda and all the rest would be down at the foot of the hill, just as they were before. Dear me, Miss Keene, I shall begin to think that all misfortunes are really blessings in disguise."

"Perhaps they are," replied Miss Keene smiling.

Then, as they had reached the foot of the hill where the others were waiting their confidential talk ended.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE END OF SUMMER

THERE were no more bugle calls heard from across the lake. The boys had gone, so had the wedding guests, Tilda among them. There was a sharp feeling in the air when the girls rose in the morning, and the trees along the lake cast red and yellow reflections instead of green ones. The squirrels were busy hoarding a winter store and every day saw a flock of birds flying southward.

"We, too, shall soon be flying south," remarked Kathleen stopping to watch a migratory flight one day when she and Judy were on their way to Aunt Mercy's. "Do you think they can be wild geese, Judy? It seems to me I heard a distant Honk! Honk!"

"Very likely," returned Judy not quite so interested; "one frequently hears them this time of year."

"I don't believe I like to hear them," said Kathleen after a pause during which they had started on again; "they sound like the end of summer."

Judy laughed. "That is very Kathleenish. I suppose if you were to hear them in the spring on their

flight north you would still be reminded of the end of summer."

"Perhaps it isn't altogether their cry," responded Kathleen after a moment's thought. "I suppose it is the association, the surroundings, the autumn coloring and the odor of the ripe leaves."

"Ripe leaves? Who said they were ripe?"

"Thoreau. I was reading his 'Excursions' the other day, and I simply love it."

"Don't believe I know the book."

"Then get acquainted. His 'Wild Apples' is perfectly fine. I never became acquainted with him either, till lately."

"And who introduced him?" inquired Judy.

"Fred Furnival. He brought me his copy and told me to keep it."

"Humph!" ejaculated Judy. She gave Kathleen a side glance. Fred had always been her especial cavalier, and she was wondering if she were generous enough to encourage such an attention to Kathleen without a pang. "Pig! Pig!" she said to herself. "Of course you are glad to have Fred be nice to Kathleen. Of course you are." But she frowned and shook her head. Presently she laughed.

"What's the joke?" inquired Kathleen.

"Myself. I was laughing at myself; that's all. Fred thinks you are perfectly fine; he has never re-

covered from the revelations Mr. Perry made about your rescue of Annabel."

"It wasn't my rescue; it was his, Mr. Perry's, I mean."

"I am not so sure. In all probability you would have been able to get back safely without his help."

"I doubt it."

"And I suppose you have doubts about Annabel, too. You think she might have come in alone without danger."

"We shall never find out because the experiment wasn't tried, but that doesn't mean that I should have all the credit."

"I don't see why not."

"I don't deserve it. I didn't do the rescuing."

"It amounts to the same thing. You rescued Annabel and Mr. Perry rescued you, if you will have it that you couldn't have come in by your own efforts."

"I am pretty sure I could not have done it, and I owe a big debt to Mr. Perry."

"Which he says you have paid."

"That's nonsense. What do you believe I could do for him, Judy? I thought I would write to him once in a while during the winter, and send him some papers every now and then."

"That would be just the best thing. The boys say they are going to keep him in mind, so neither he nor

Aunt Mercy will spend such lonely, doleful winter days as they have done heretofore."

"Poor, dear Aunt Mercy, she will hate to say good-bye. It does not seem possible that this will be our farewell visit to her."

"Who took her the wedding cake?"

"Sadie herself. She said she and the doctor would go around this way, and she knew Aunt Mercy would be pleased if she brought it her very self."

"Of course she would, and wasn't that just like Sadie to think of going out of her way at such a time to please an old lady whom she scarcely knew?"

"Just like her. Dear Aunt Mercy, I wonder if she gave a bit of the cake to Sukey; of course Mountry had a share and probably Malt, too, if he didn't disdain it."

Their talk had brought them to the gate. The day was clear with a sharp tang in the air, so Aunt Mercy was indoors. She insisted that they should not sit in the kitchen, but should have a fire in the wood stove in the parlor.

"Those nice, good boys laid the fire, and brought me in a great pile of wood," she told them, "and I want that you should enjoy that room once more with me. I'd like to remember you two sitting there by the fire, just as if it might be the other day, whenever I look up. I guess this is going to be about the most

comfortable winter I have had in many a long day. What do you think those boys did? Gathered in all my potatoes and apples, and stored them for me. Mr. Perry stopped in yesterday to see if he couldn't do a turn, but I told him it was all done. He said he guessed he'd happen along about once a week to lessen my wood-pile. I presume he meant that he would bring it indoors by the armful. I don't know as I can repay him."

"He would probably be offended if you offered to," said Judy.

"Well, I told him to help himself to potatoes and apples. I've more than I can use, and when it comes to getting in the turnips and parsnips he can have some of those. I can do him a baking once in a while, too, not but what he can't make his own bread and biscuits and such, or that he ain't handy, for you say he is as good a cook as the next, but I guess he won't refuse a loaf of my gingerbread."

"He'd be a goose if he did," said Kathleen. "You make the best gingerbread in Maine."

Miss Mercy looked pleased. "My brother used to think I was a master hand at it," she replied. "He used to say that he cal'lated my gingerbread and doughnuts would take a prize at any Fair. But there, as my mother used to say, 'self-praise is half scandal,' so I cal'late I'd better stop talking about myself and

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talk about something that's worth while. Now, tell me about that sweet bride. Have you heard from her?"

"Yes, and she is having a lovely wedding journey," Judy told her.

"Where she gone?"

"She and her husband are taking a walking tour through the White Mountains and up into Canada."

"Lands sakes! You don't mean it. Can't they afford to go any other way?"

The girls laughed. "Why, yes, but they prefer that way. They both love to walk, and believe they can get more pleasure out of such a trip than by going in a conventional way."

"My, my, ain't it funny? Well, every one to his taste, as the old woman said when she kissed the cow. I cal'lated they was going to go all the way in that automobile. Lots of people does that. The way they come footing along this road is a caution, especially this time o' year."

"How did you like the wedding cake?" asked Kathleen. "We all had a hand in the making, so you needn't be afraid to criticize."

"It was real good. I don't know as I ever eat better. Lands! I don't know when I tasted any. I suppose you young ladies all dreamt on it."

The girls laughed a little consciously. "I suppose we did," they confessed.

"And who got the bouquet?"

"Evelyn."

"She's the fat one, ain't she? Well, she was spry for once. I guess she is good-natured and maybe she'll get rid of that stoutness when she is older; I shouldn't wonder if it wasn't just girl fat."

"We must tell Ev that," said Judy laughing.

"So do, and tell her I've seen several girls in my youth who was just as fat as she is, and now they are real lanky old women."

The girls laughed again. The picture of Evelyn as a lanky old woman was beyond their imaginations.

"The one,—there, I am such a hand to forget names, who is the young lady that gave me Mounty?"

"Nannie Bates."

Aunt Mercy nodded. "Well, she was here to say good-bye and she left me a dozen or so postal cards with her name and directions on 'em, and I was to let her know about Mounty. She said if I'd just write, 'Doing well,' or something like that it would do, but I was to put in a word about Sukey and Malty, too, if I had time. She is real friendly."

"And what about yourself? Didn't she want a word about how you might be?"

"Oh, yes, but that ain't important."

"Well, whatever, or whoever, Nannie may want you

to tell about, we shall expect to hear about our Aunt Mercy," declared Judy.

"You mean you expect me to write to you? I don't know as I've written a letter or had one in years."

"You can write only if you feel like it, but we shall all write to you."

"Land! you don't mean it!"

"We shall certainly do it, and the boys are going to write to Mr. Perry, so you will be hearing of them, and probably of us, quite often. You can write once in a while to us as a whole, and that won't seem so much of a work."

"Well, my dears, I guess if you knew what that will mean you would be pleased. To think of me going out and finding a letter in my box after all these years of getting none. My brother had the box put there and I always kept it, but the rural delivery man scarcely ever stops. He brings the weekly paper, but in very bad weather he leaves it at the Hamblett's at the top of the hill and they bring it down when they get a chance, but I cal'late there'll be a surprise this year when the rural free finds I'm getting so much mail." She laughed in her little chirpy way.

The short afternoon and the waning light warned the girls that they must start for camp. They stood for a moment, looking round the cozy room, warm from the air-tight stove, and bright in its new paint

and carpet, while Aunt Mercy hurried up-stairs after telling them to wait a moment. "Can't you see her sitting here on wintry days and watching from the window for the postman?" said Kathleen.

"And Mr. Perry coming up the road through the snow? Won't they enjoy swapping news of us and the boys? What do you suppose she hurried up-stairs for, Kath?"

"Can't imagine, but here she comes."

Aunt Mercy returned bearing something in each hand. "I wanted to give you something to remember me by," she said, "but I didn't have anything new, so I thought maybe you'd like these. I can't never forget all you've done for me, never, and I want you should understand that I appreciate it when you look at these. This sampler I did when I was eight years old. I heard you say one day that you liked samplers," she turned to Judy, "and I want you should have it."

"I do like samplers, I love them," Judy answered, "but, Aunt Mercy, this is a treasure, an heirloom."

"No, no, 'tain't. There's nobody to leave it to, and if there was I'd rather you'd have it than any one. And this little bead bag was my mother's," she said handing the old-fashioned, but beautiful, piece of handiwork to Kathleen.

"Oh, but Aunt Mercy," Kathleen protested, "if it was your mother's you should keep it."

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"No, no, it just lays away in a trunk, and I know my mother well enough to sense how she would be pleased for you to have it. Don't you be a mite afraid to take it."

"It is beautiful," said Kathleen turning it over and examining the roses on one side and the wreath on the other. "I shall prize it very, very highly."

So, touched, and half saddened by these gifts, they made their farewells and turned their faces toward camp leaving Aunt Mercy to watch them out of sight. Mounty saw them politely to the gate, and Maltz watched them from his seat on the window-sill of the "settin'-room." They looked back more than once at the white house seen now more distinctly between the sparsely clad trees and wind-swept vines.

It was Judy who spoke first: "I never could have believed that I would feel such a lump in my throat at leaving a plain little old lady whom I never saw till three months ago, who is no relation to me, and with whom I have not so very much in common."

"It is like leaving a child whom you have sort of adopted, I suppose," said Kathleen. "She is so trusting, so uncomplaining, so—what is it they say in Spain? —so ——"

"So *simpatica*," returned Judy; "yes, that is just it. Well, she has come in our lives to stay, and she has been a great factor in our summer joys. To-morrow,

Kathleen, we must make our farewell call on Mr. Perry."

But there was no opportunity of doing this, for though they went to the cabin no one was at home and, as several times before they had been obliged to do, they could only leave a birch-bark card with their good-byes upon it. They half suspected, but did not know, that the hermit had absented himself on purpose, knowing exactly when camp would close, and looking for just such a farewell visit. He would not admit to himself that it made any difference to him, and told himself that he would be not a whit less contented than heretofore, but the thought of the deserted camp, of the silent grove which had lately been alive with fun and laughter, of the unused wharf, gave him a sudden feeling of desolation. "I just can't say good-bye; I might make a fool of myself," he muttered as he marched off into the depths of the further woods.

The final morning had come. The motor boat filled with trunks had made one trip and was back again for a group of eager girls who stood waiting for it. Some of the company had gone the day before to join relatives in Portland and to remain still longer in the vicinity, but under Miss Keene's wing were now left Kathleen, Judy, Annabel and Evelyn, all of whom had the same destination in view. The boat came up, wraps and bags were tossed on board, the girls sprang

in followed by Miss Keene, and then the man-of-all-work, who had faithfully served them all summer, started the motor and they were off.

As the boat shot through the water, leaving the happy shores behind, the girls with one accord sang, to the tune of Araby's Daughter, the song which they had made for this special occasion :

“ ‘ Farewell, then farewell, to Kuequenáku ! ’

Thus warbled sad maidens above the green wave,

‘ No camp ever lay beside Maine's favored waters

Which showed more delights or more benefits gave.

Farewell, to the long pines, to each Camp Fire ember ;

Farewell, to the lodges, and camping-out days ;

Farewell, to the summer we all shall remember ;

For Camp Kuequenáku we've nothing but praise. ’ ”

The shores receded further and further. The wharf became a speck. The grove itself was lost in a blur. Then they set their feet upon the landing at the end of the lake, took up their bags, turned a corner and saw the long street of the village. The lake was lost to view.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BRIGHTWOOD AGAIN

THE maples before the Hoveys' house were brilliant in their reds and yellows and Ray's garden was ablaze with color when Kathleen turned in at the gate. She had arrived from Portland that morning, had taken the first train, and meant to surprise her friends in Brightwood. She rang the bell like any stranger and stood waiting, a smile upon her lips. How familiar it looked! Across the street stood her aunt's house no less uninteresting and plain than when she had made her escape from it a year before. The same dull color, the same treeless lot, the same flowerless borders. No, there were the plants she had set out, the rose-bush, greatly grown, and the little, yellow, button chrysanthemums bravely doing their best.

She was so lost in contemplation of her late home that she did not notice that the door had opened, but she turned quickly when an ecstatic voice cried, "Kathleen!" Then she was clasped rapturously and drawn into the house. Other voices from the back called out: "Who is it, Ray? Who is it?"

Ray, after giving Kathleen one more frantic hug,



thrust her into the parlor, put her finger on her lip to enjoin silence and ran to where her sisters and mother were expectantly waiting.

"It's company," said Ray. "I'll give you three guesses."

"It is some one you were glad to see, for you squealed as if you were delighted."

"Oh, I can guess: it's Tilda, of course," decided Margaret, as if that settled it, but Ray shook her head.

"Then it's Sig," Grace made the guess, believing Margaret had given the clue.

"As if I would be so delighted to see a boy," retorted Ray scornfully, and Grace was silenced.

"One more guess," Mrs. Hovey said, "and we'd better hurry up if we don't want to keep the company waiting. I'll make a venture, though probably I shall not be anyway near right. Let me see: it's Mrs. Furnival."

Ray burst into a fit of laughter. "That's too funny," she cried, "though maybe it is a prophecy."

"I never heard anything so mysterious as that speech," declared Grace, and then Kathleen, who could not stand waiting any longer, walked into the dining-room.

More explosive greetings, and such a welcome as none but the Hoveys could give. When the surprise

was over Mrs. Hovey's housewifely mind immediately turned to a thought of dinner and of what could be served that would best please Kathleen's taste. Ray rushed her up-stairs to take off her things. Nothing short of the guest room was good enough for her, and here the two old comrades began to chatter like magpies.

"You were awfully good about writing," said Ray, "and after what you wrote about Fred's giving you a book and of his being so nice and attentive I just thought it was a perfect scream when mother guessed it was Mrs. Furnival. I told her maybe it was prophetic."

Kathleen blushed up to her eyes. "Oh, Ray," she expostulated, "don't say such things."

"Why not? Fred was here the other day and praised you up to the skies. Oh, Kath, it would be lovely."

But Kathleen frowned, feeling herself disloyal to Judy even to listen to such suggestions. "I don't want you to say such things," she said severely. "It is all perfect nonsense. You know Judy and Fred have been chums for years."

"Chums, yes, and for that very reason ——" Ray went on, but at a reproachful look from Kathleen she stopped. "All right, I won't, if you don't like it," she said. "My, how brown you are, Kathleen; I didn't

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notice it so much before you took off your hat, and what a color! I never saw you look so well in all my life. It certainly has agreed with you. Now, come down and tell us all about it while I set the table. My, but it is good to have you back again." Ray had always been Kathleen's admiring and devoted companion when she lived in Brightwood. She was totally unlike Judy and their intimacy was of a different kind, but Kathleen loved her loyally and was more at home with the Hoveys than with any other persons in the world.

While Ray set the table, and Margaret helped her mother with the dinner, Kathleen was made to sit where all could see and hear her in a chair in close proximity to the kitchen door. There was not a point all did not wish to know, from Mother Hovey down. The smallest detail that concerned Kathleen concerned them. No persons on earth, scarce even Judy, showed such interest in the intimate little things which affected her. It was as if they were her very own family. As they were seated at last at the table and Kathleen looked from one beaming face to another, she suddenly left her place. "I can't eat my dinner till I have kissed each one of you again," she declared. "There is nobody like you Hoveys and never will be."

"Dear child, dear child," murmured Mrs. Hovey as she folded her in a large embrace.

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Then the dinner went on, bits of Brightwood news filtering through the talk. Had Kathleen noticed the Eckerts' new barn? Did she see how Ray had enlarged her garden? Had she observed the white house going up on the next corner? Mr. Sadler was building that. Tilda was expected home the next day, and Sig, too. Sig hoped to go to college the next year, but of course Kathleen knew all about that, having seen the boys up at camp. They were all back again but Sig who, with Tilda, had been staying with his aunt.

The dinner over the girls laughingly hustled Mrs. Hovey out of the kitchen and Kathleen, declaring she would help with the dishes, was allowed to remain and ask questions about Margaret's work with the Camp Fire Girls. It had been rather quiet in the town during the summer with so many of the boys away, and Tilda, too, but those who remained had been busy, had accomplished many things and now meant to take up again the work of improving the town. Margaret's face lighted up when Kathleen began to ask about Mr. Munroe, who had been head teacher the previous year. He and Margaret were engaged, but the wedding day was not to be very soon as Mr. Munroe was still at college and it would be two years before he was graduated. Of course there was intense interest in Sadie's wedding and all that. Indeed there was so much to

tell and so much to hear that the moments flew and the afternoon was half gone before they knew it.

"I must go over to Aunt Susan's," declared Kathleen coming to a realizing sense of what was expected of her. "She will never forgive me if she hears I have been here all this time and have not been there. I suppose Mrs. Stebbins is still on deck?"

"Oh, dear, yes," Ray told her. "She goes up to her farm and stays till she quarrels with her daughter-in-law, then she comes here and stays till she quarrels with her brother. Just now the daughter-in-law quarrel is on, so you may expect to have the bliss of seeing her."

Kathleen went out reluctantly. She was really fond of her aunt and her Cousin Jimmy. She was half indifferent to Mr. Wyatt, but Mrs. Stebbins was far from being beloved, and she always dreaded a meeting with her. She crossed the street, went in the gate and stood for a moment on the narrow porch before she opened the door. The years of her early trials passed before her. Was it possible that she was emancipated from them? For the moment it almost seemed as if she were not, that she would be chided for neglecting her duties in staying to dinner with the Hoveys, that she must go in to darn stockings or mend table-cloths, and so spend the afternoon. Then a wave of relief came over her. There would never again be for her the narrow confines of such an existence. She was no longer

under obligation. She no longer needed the help of those who had given her a home not because of love for her but because of duty. She opened the door and walked in, following her way down the narrow entry to the dining-room where she felt sure she would find her aunt.

She was not mistaken. Mrs. Wyatt sat at one window darning stockings, Mrs. Stebbins at the other mending one of her own frocks. "Well, Auntie," said Kathleen gaily.

Mrs. Wyatt dropped her work and looked up. "I thought it was about time you came over," she said. "Maria saw you go in to the Hoveys hours ago."

"I stayed to dinner and helped with the dishes afterward," explained Kathleen, wondering why any excuse was necessary and why she felt that she must make one.

"When did you get back?" inquired Mrs. Wyatt as Kathleen drew up a chair.

"Early this morning. I took the first train I could get after we had had breakfast."

"Who came with you?"

"On the boat? Miss Keene, Judy and two other girls."

"I suppose you are going back to town. When does your school begin?"

"Yes, I am going back. School begins on the first."

"I suppose you will go to the Falkners, or will you?"

"No, I am not going there."

For the first time Mrs. Stebbins looked up from the black and white patch she was putting on the sleeve of the calico waist she held. "Why not?" she queried sharply.

"The Falkners are going to an apartment hotel this winter," Kathleen explained to her aunt; "they are going to have some repairs and alterations made at their house." She avoided saying that Mrs. Falkner desired a rest from household cares, for she knew with what scorn the statement would be received.

"Then where are you going?" inquired Mrs. Wyatt.

"Aunt Milly wished very much to have me come to her and make her house my home always," said Kathleen, not a little proudly, "but I talked it over with Miss Keene and then with Uncle Addison, and we decided that it would be better for me to finish my course of studies, and then go, perhaps."

"In the meantime how are you going to live?" inquired Mrs. Stebbins. "We all know that you have no more than a beggar, and you cannot expect to live on charity."

"I shall not live on charity." Kathleen lifted her head haughtily. "My aunt and uncle wished to provide for me, but I would not accept such a gift, so I have allowed them to lend me the money."

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"Allowed them! Lend you the money!" Mrs. Stebbins' nose went up in the air. "They'll never see the first cent of that money, and I guess Milly Townley is just as big a fool as she always was, and probably her husband isn't much better."

Kathleen sprang to her feet. "Apologize," she cried. "I insist that you apologize for that speech. You have insulted me for years, but I can stand that. What I will not stand is your remarks about my own aunt, who is so much better a woman than you could ever hope to be that——"

She was interrupted by a scream from Mrs. Stebbins. "Apologize to you? You poor little charity creature, and after such an insult? I'd like to know what you mean?"

Kathleen was trembling in every limb. She knew that she had allowed her indignation to get the better of her judgment and that she was very wrong to speak to a person of Mrs. Stebbins' age as she had done, especially in her aunt's house. Though still trembling she turned to Mrs. Wyatt and spoke with seeming calmness. "I think I had better not stay any longer," she said, "and please don't expect me ever to enter this house while Mrs. Stebbins occupies it," and holding her head high she left the room trying not to hear the speech Mrs. Stebbins flung after her.

Mrs. Wyatt followed her to the door. "What were



you thinking of, Kathleen," she said, "to speak to Maria like that? You know as well as I do what a temper she has, and how she would resent it."

"What about my resentment?" asked Kathleen. "Do you suppose I am going to allow her to speak of me and to me like that whenever she chooses? I don't want to say anything disagreeable to you, Aunt Susan, but I wish Mrs. Stebbins to know that I am perfectly independent of her brother's assistance and that I shall consider it my duty to pay him back every penny he has spent on me."

"Don't talk in that high-flown way," said Mrs. Wyatt. "I'd like to know what you expect you are going to be when you speak so casually of paying off debts, first to your aunt in Florida and then to us. I told you, and I told James, and I told Maria, long ago, that you more than earned your keep and that settles it. I have nothing to do with these new-found relations of yours, but I know I don't grudge you anything I ever did for you, and what's more I shall never fail of my duty to you whatever comes."

At this Kathleen melted entirely. The tears began to flow as she flung her arms around her aunt. "You know I can never forget what you have done," she quavered, trying to control her voice. "I do love you, but you won't think me unloving and ungrateful if I stay away from Mrs. Stebbins."

"There now, don't get into heroics," said Mrs. Wyatt disengaging herself. "I guess I'd like to keep away from Maria myself, if I could, and I don't blame you. I'll come over and you can tell me about your plans. It is just as well to leave Maria by herself to cool off."

So they crossed the street together and entered Mrs. Hovey's parlor where Kathleen told of the little corner of the world where she had arranged to stay. "The rooms are in an old house, in a quiet part of the city," she said. "The house belongs to two nice old ladies who live there; that makes it perfectly respectable for me to be with them. Sadie Wallace had the rooms and her sister Florence is to stay with me. So, Auntie, you see it will be entirely proper, quiet and unpretentious. I hope you will come to see me there, some day, and we can have a luncheon together. There is a cunning kitchenette, you know, and we shall cook most of our own meals."

Mrs. Wyatt looked pleased. "I'd like to do that," she confessed, "and maybe I will come some of these days." She was interested in all Kathleen had to tell, and while evidently rather jealous of Kathleen's Florida relatives, had no unkind things to say about them. She made quite a long visit, and went off at dusk promising to send Jimmy over that evening.

Kathleen watched her enter her own home with a

strange feeling of pity. She realized that hers was not an easy life with Mrs. Stebbins as a housemate, and she wondered how the two would settle matters between them. Aunt Susan could hold her own when necessity required, but it would not be a very happy hour for the two. Withal, after that first throb of pity Kathleen's own feeling was one of relief that she had escaped and of shame that she had allowed herself to be so uncontrolled. What had the summer done for her if she had no more self-restraint than this? She gave a deep sigh and told herself humbly that the hope of becoming a Torch Bearer was still a long way off.

Jimmy came flying over immediately after supper. He gave her a bear-like hug, held her off at arm's length and told her she was all right. He listened eagerly to all she told him of the camp of the Boy Scouts and Camp Winnegen, was quite impressed by the recountal of the various things Kathleen had learned to do and he finally burst out with: "I say, Kath, you're getting ahead of me. I can't do half those things, and look here, I'm going up there, too, some of these days. If the boys go next year I'll get there somehow, if I have to walk. I don't mean to stay in Brightwood forever, you see, and when I come to the city you and I can keep house together. My, but it's fine to see you."

Jimmy was nothing if not genuine, and Kathleen appreciated his rough and tumble appreciation of her accomplishments. She would stand by Jimmy, help where she could, and, perhaps, if he did make his way to the city there would be greater opportunities for exerting an influence over him. "I tell you what you must do, Jimmy," she said. "You must work hard at school and try to get ahead, then you might take a business course and be on the lookout for a good position some day. You can't have anything for nothing, you know, and if you want to get ahead you must study."

"I'll do it," cried Jimmy newly inspired. "I always was a duffer and hated school, but I am beginning to see that a fellow mustn't be a dunderhead if he hopes to get anywhere, so see old Jimmy sprunt up and dig this year. Yes, sir, I'll surprise the gang; you see if I don't. I've got a lot of new ideas since we had the Boy Scouts here and I guess maybe I needed waking up."

With these encouraging signs Kathleen felt that she might be proud of Jimmy some day, and liked his dream of their keeping house together, however impossible it might actually be.

The next day Tilda blew in, as breezy and lively as ever, and the next evening there was a meeting of the Ohuanuáh-Nah Camp Fire when it was a joy to Kath-

leen to join her old mates and to feel that she was one with them again. Next was a frolic at Tilda's house likewise in the manner of former days, a good, healthy, boy and girl time, full of fun and laughter. Jimmy was one of the company and Fred Furnival came over from Weston.

There was a chance meeting with Mr. Wyatt, if not a cordial one, and Kathleen felt when they parted that he had washed his hands of her and was relieved that she was no more a dependent in his household. She told herself that if ever she came back with a full purse she might be sure of a welcome. Even Aunt Susan was not above compromising with Mrs. Stebbins on account of what she contributed toward expenses.

At the end of the week appeared dear Cousin Almira Baxter, in her old-fashioned buggy, to bear Kathleen off to the country. The little street Arab, Snooper, or "Matthew Sullivan," as Cousin Almira called him, was on hand, grinning from ear to ear as they drove up.

"Hallo, Snooper," Kathleen greeted him, and he gave her a sly wink as he took the reins to drive the horse to the stable after Mrs. Baxter's charge: "Be careful, Matthew."

It was a lovely and peaceful week end, and Kathleen went off on Monday morning feeling that she was rich indeed with two homes open to her, for Cousin Almira long since had expressed a desire to keep her young

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cousin with her always. It had been a wonderful year and Kathleen pondered over its events as the train bore her back to the city. Fortune had surely tipped her golden horn to pour forth gifts for one who had felt herself orphaned, unloved and hopeless.

## CHAPTER XX

### TORCH BEARERS

**B**ACK to the roar and rumble of the city! After the quiet of homely little Brightwood and the peace of the country it seemed more deafening than ever. Kathleen had not told Judy when she would arrive, for she thought she would like to go alone to the little apartment, settle her belongings and get her bearings before anything else was done. Florence would be away at the office and she would have the place all to herself. One of the prim old ladies opened the door for her and she mounted the stairs to the rooms which would mean home to her, she wondered how long.

The place did not look very tidy, and this fact gave Kathleen a slight feeling of homesickness, but she bravely set to work to adjust things to her better liking, yet realizing that it would not be all a rosy way with Florence as partner.

"I suppose I needn't have taken on Florence," she said to herself, "but it meant so much to Sadie who has been so good to me, and it is much the cheapest arrangement I could have made, so I must not quarrel

with conditions, but just make the best of it." She could not help feeling that Florence might have shown a little more interest in making the place attractive for her, but put that aside and bustled about, unpacking, settling, dusting, rearranging until the rooms assumed a much more homelike look. She surveyed it all with a satisfied look. "Now I'll call up Judy," she said, and went down-stairs. For a comparatively small sum she and Florence had the use of the telephone in common with the Misses Price, who owned the house.

It was Judy herself who answered. Would she come over and take lunch? Of course. She was dying to come, couldn't wait, and would be over right away. Should she bring some provender? No? Why not? Brought a lot of things from the country? Good! She rang off and almost before Kathleen believed it possible there she was at the door.

"I feel as if you had been away for a year," she cried. "I missed you dreadfully, and, but that it would have hurt mother's feelings, I would have followed you. It has been so stirry-up and disagreeable. First I had to get a lot of things from the house and then mother insisted that I had nothing decent to wear and she has been rushing me out shopping every day till I am worn to a frazzle."

"Poor Judy," Kathleen commiserated. "How do you think it looks? I have been working like a Tro-



jan all morning putting things to rights. Florence evidently does not have Sadie's housewifely ideas."

"It looks perfectly lovely," Judy assured her. "You always have the true feminine touch, Kathleen, and know how to make things homelike. Where did you get your flowers?"

"Cousin Almira gave them to me. Wouldn't you know they came from the country? I came laden down. Between the Hoveys and Cousin Almira I shall not suffer this winter. We are going to have a lovely time all to ourselves."

The little table was already set and from the pantry Kathleen produced a cold roast chicken, a pan of rolls, a pat of butter and an apple pie. Judy laughed as she saw the array. "How in the world did you get all those things here?" she asked.

"Brought them in my suit-case," Kathleen told her. "And this isn't all; I have still eggs, apples and a bottle of cream."

"But what in the world did you do with your clothes?" inquired Judy.

"What I hadn't room for I sent by parcel's post."

Judy laughed still more. "Well, for contriving ways and means commend me to Kathleen Gilman. It all looks so good, and it is such fun to have it by ourselves in this cozy way."

"It is the first time in my life, I want you to remem-

ber," said Kathleen impressively, "that I have ever had a place of my very own to which I could invite my friends, and I wanted you to be the first, Judy." Judy gave her a silent hug and they sat down to their meal.

It was when they had come to the pie that Judy asked, "Do you think you are going to be happy to have Florence with you?"

"I can't tell yet," returned Kathleen slowly, "but I shall try to be, and even if I am not quite happy I shall keep on, for I could not be such a coward as to be unwilling to make a sacrifice for her and for Sadie." She was silent a moment before she said: "I really feel as if I should do something unpleasant in order to discipline myself. I slipped 'way back, Judy, when I was in Brightwood and behaved like that old uncontrolled, undisciplined Kathleen you first knew." Then she told her of the altercation with Mrs. Stebbins.

"I don't see how you could help saying what you did," maintained Judy. "I could never have stood her as long as you did; horrid old thing!"

"If she had been a young person I couldn't blame myself, but I had no right to make it any worse for Aunt Susan than it is; besides it was undignified. I put myself on the same level with Mrs. Stebbins, you see, and have felt very humble ever since."

Judy made no comment for a moment, then she looked up from her pie in a half ashamed, half droll

manner. "I fell down on my resolution, too," she confessed. "I flew out at mother just as hatefully as I ever did, and behaved like the worst spoiled minx you ever saw. Annabel could be no worse."

"Oh, Judy!" began Kathleen, then each looked up at the other and burst out laughing.

"Aren't we a pair?" cried Judy. "But, my dear, I am beginning to wonder why we should be surprised at not being perfect. Aren't we human beings?"

"I felt like a tiger cat when I was talking to Mrs. Stebbins," remarked Kathleen.

"And I felt like a foolish little puppy when I was talking to mamma."

"Then why did we do so?"

"Oh, the old Adam has to get loose sometimes, I suppose. Well, Kath, you probably will not have that temptation again, but, as for me, who can say when I shall let my angry passions rise? All the same after each of my flyings to pieces I feel more remorseful than I did before and I suppose that is something gained. Now, to chirk you up after this doleful confession, I am going to tell you something that will make you happy."

"Do hurry up with it, then, for I am in need of chirking up."

"Well, I saw Miss Keene yesterday and we had a long talk. What do you think she said?"

"Can't imagine."

"That she had been testing us both this summer to learn our powers of leadership, that what we had done with the girls, with Annabel, particularly, made her feel that we could become Torch Bearers very soon."

"Oh, Judy, really?"

"Really and truly. I told her of my tiff with mother and asked her if she thought any one like that could be a fit candidate, and she just smiled in that wise way she has and said she had never expected to have angel assistants. She needed human ones and since Sadie's departure she had been putting you and me through tests and she thought we might now know what was before us. She thinks in another month you will have shown what you can do with Florence and I can deal with Annabel."

Kathleen was thoughtful after this for a while, but presently she made known the result of her cogitations. "I have been thinking, Judy," she said, "that the very best thing we could do would be to appeal to Annabel to use her best influence upon Florence and say to Florence that we hope she can be of use to Annabel; that will put each on her mettle and so they will be of mutual benefit."

"What a clever idea!" cried Judy. "Of course that will work beautifully. You have already won Annabel and if she thinks she can serve you by helping

to look after Florence she will do it. Her pride and vanity will be touched to begin with ——”

“Do we want her to be touched in that way?”

“Well, not altogether, but if she begins to see shortcomings in others it will rouse her to avoid them in herself, something like curing the bite with the hair of the dog, you see.”

Kathleen laughed. “Well, it will do no harm to interest one in the other and see how it works.”

How it worked became apparent not long after when Annabel was able to save Florence from a foolish and hurtful experience and Florence awoke to the fact that a young girl, making her way in a big city, must avoid even the appearance of evil. She gradually, too, turned to Kathleen as to an elder sister. Her faults were usually the result of ignorance rather than of wrong intention, and she was quick to discern what was approved, and what was not, by the girls whom she most respected and admired.

At first Kathleen was not happy in the partnership, but by degrees Florence grew very dear to her. “She is only a child who has a lot to learn,” Kathleen told Judy, “and when she learns she will be all right. She hasn’t Sadie’s depth nor her sweetness, but she has her own charm and she is as quick as a whip when it comes to her work in the office.”

All this came about in the course of the winter and

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was not a thing of sudden growth. During this time Aunt Mercy was not forgotten and a weekly letter was sent to her, while at Christmas many were the packages which found their way to the lonely little farmhouse.

Both Mr. Perry and Aunt Mercy wrote on Christmas Day that they had dined together and had passed a happy day in opening the gifts and in reading the messages from the Camp Fire Girls. The letter was read at the next Council Fire and brought a vision of snow-clad hills, white, untrodden valleys and the lonely little farmhouse standing in the midst of winter-wreathed trees.

This Council Fire was held on New Year's Eve in Miss Minton's big studio, and the girls meant to see the old year out. It was such a great occasion that no one had accepted any invitation which would interfere with this evening's programme, so as each girl's ceremonial name was spoken when the roll was called there was a prompt response of "Kolah." Florence and Annabel, much excited, stood together. To-night they were to become Wood Gatherers. Judy and Kathleen felt almost as if they were sponsors for these two younger girls, yet for them the evening held even a more personal interest.

The pretty studio was gay with lights when they all came in. It smelled of the resinous pines with which

it was decorated. A tall cedar tree stood each side the big fireplace and the mantel was banked with holly and balsam fir. There were green wreaths over the pictures and festoons over the doors. No fire burned in the fireplace as yet, but fagots lay ready and the rubbing sticks were at hand.

"How lovely and woodsy it is," cried Judy as she and Kathleen came in. "It will be almost like having our fire out-of-doors, and doesn't it remind you of our camp? All this green and the trees and—— Oh, listen!" For a bird song suddenly trilled out from one of the trees where Miss Minton had concealed her canary in a green cage.

"I'll have to put him in the other room, after a while," Miss Minton said as she came forward, "for he will get too noisy when we begin our ceremonies, but I thought it would be effective to have him sing, if he would, when you first came in. He has some quite wild notes, for he is not a pure canary."

So Dicky bird was presently borne away, the lights were turned down and directly the girls returned silently, to the subdued music of a Victrola, and took their places in the circle. This was to be a night of high ceremonies and nothing was omitted which might add to beauty or solemnity. The rubbing sticks were used and in time the faint spark appeared which lighted a fire in the great fireplace.

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Florence had chosen the name of Tscholens, because, like her sister Sadie, she liked to sing. She had appealed to Kathleen to find something which sounded unusual and they had discovered that in the language of the Navajos Tscholens means a bird.

Annabel had taken her name from the Onondaga word Orawichsa, meaning a sunflower. "I take this because I like sunshine and light and bright things, and the sunflower turns to the sun," she told them.

So these names were bestowed upon the two new Wood Gatherers and then to Judy and Kathleen came the supreme moment when they were made Torch Bearers.

"That light which has been given to me,  
I desire to pass undimmed to others."

They repeated the words earnestly, and Miss Keene felt no doubt but that they would bear their torches with all honor.

It would be a long evening and there was time for a Count which Kitty read, before the music and fun. The fire was allowed to die down while supper was served but many candles glowed from mantel and shelf, from window sill and bracketed corner. Just at the closing moment of the dying year the candles were extinguished and only the last glowing embers of the fire lighted the room. At the first stroke of midnight



the two new Wood Gatherers, with Betty Morrison, herself of the same rank, brought in three unlighted candles which were placed in a triangle. The girls silently seated themselves and at the stroke of twelve the three Torch Bearers, Miss Minton, Kathleen and Judy lighted the candles while all sang a hymn to the dying year. Then from outside came the clangor of bells, the shrilling of whistles, the blowing of horns telling that the old year was indeed gone. "Happy New Year! Happy New Year!" cried each girl, and forming a procession they went with tapers around the room to the candles until all were ablaze again.

At last, leaving the fragrant green-decked room, they all went out into the sparkling air of the winter's night. What the New Year would bring who could tell? But each heart beat high and each carried the firm resolve to "Follow the Law of the Fire."



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